Ishwar Ashram Trust

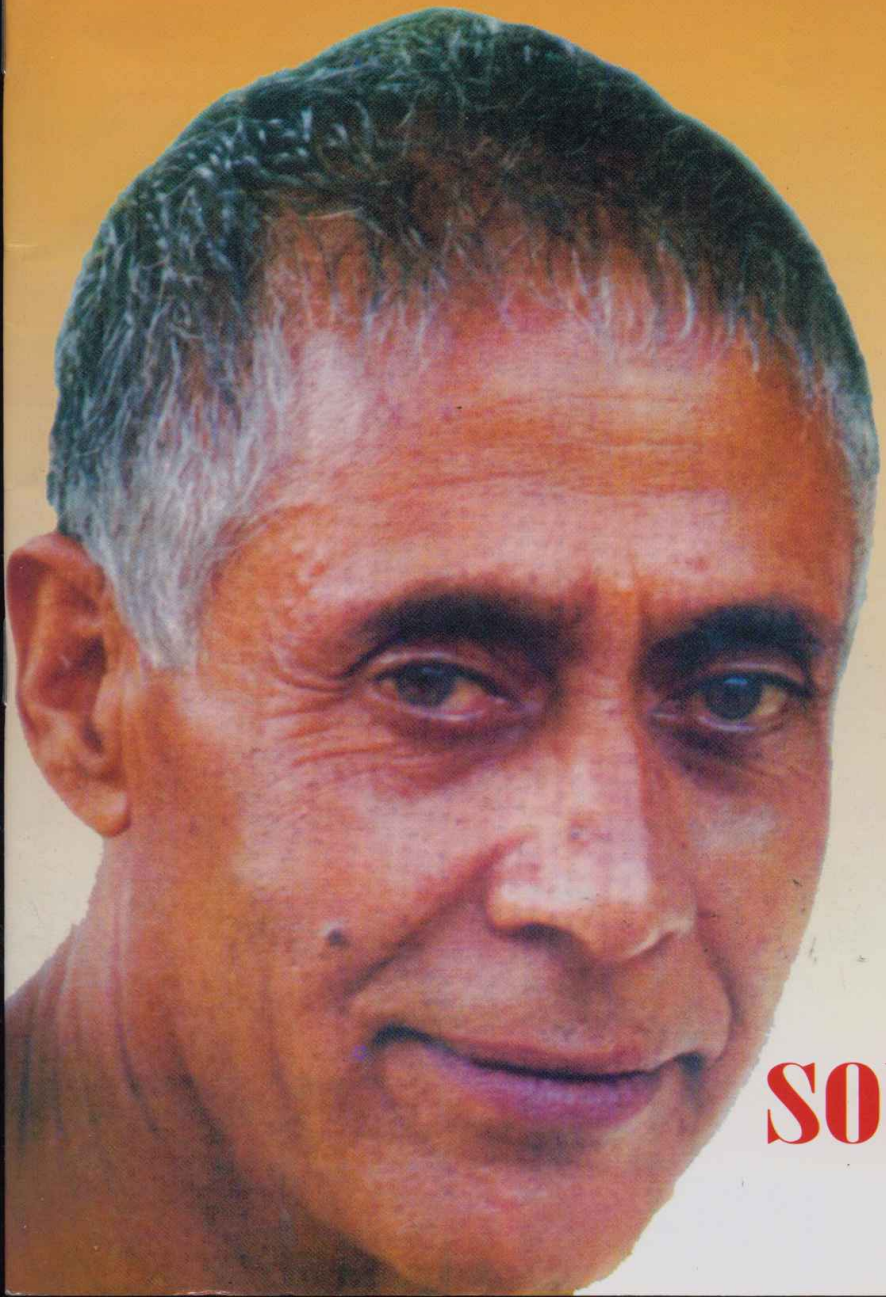
International Seminar

on

Kashmir Shaivism

Sept. 28-29, 2013

SKICC Auditoruim, Hotel Centaur, Srinagar



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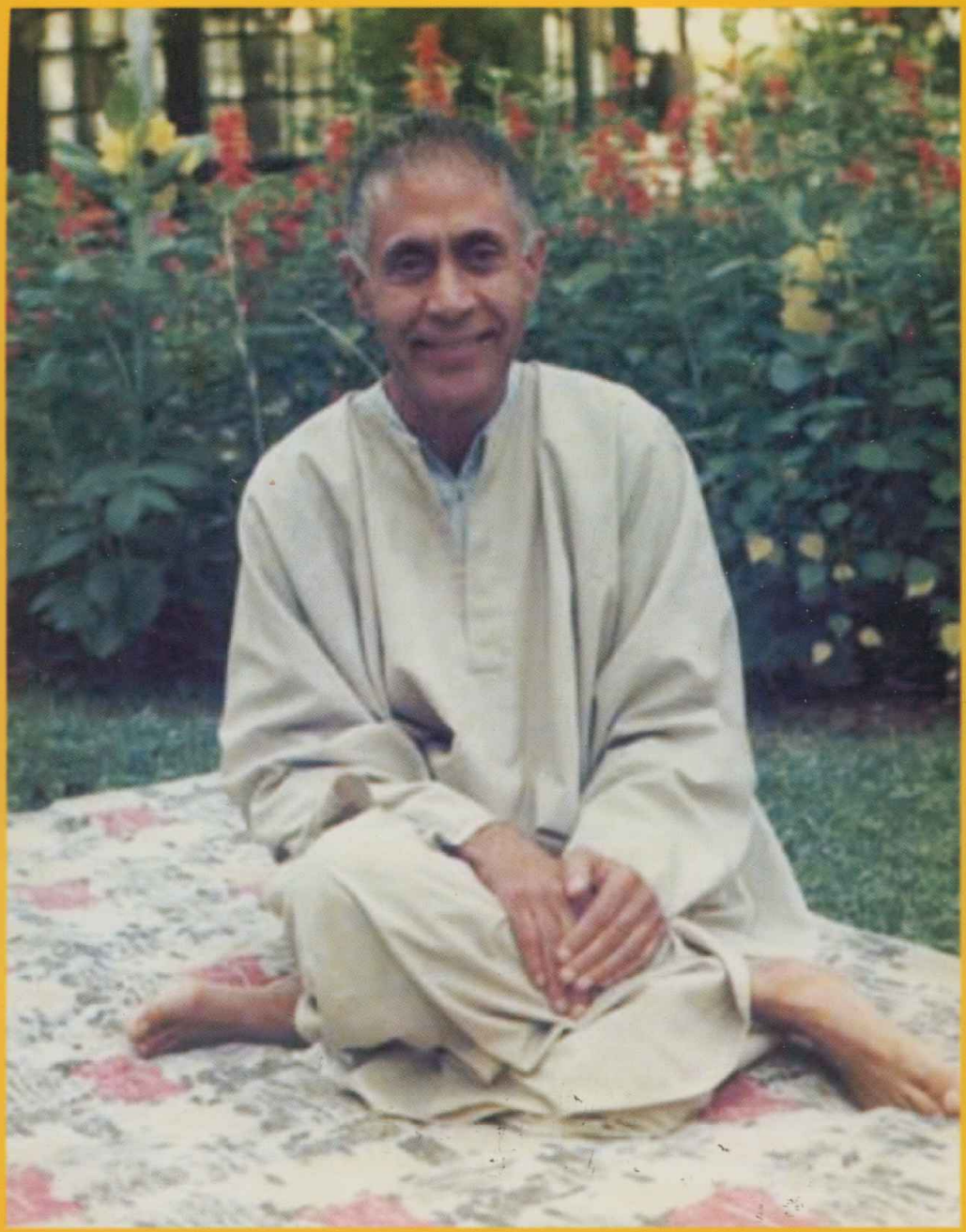

Ishwarswaroop Swami Lakshman Joo Maharaj
(1907-1991)

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GOVERNOR
JAMMU & KASHMIR

RAJ BHAVAN
SRINAGAR-190001

I learn that the Ishwar Ashram Trust, Ishber Nishat, Srinagar, is shortly organizing an International Seminar on "Kashmir Shaivism".

The Ishwar Ashram Trust has been, for many years now, making a valuable contribution by organizing lectures and varied other activities for promoting deeper understanding of Kashmir Shaivism. I learn that the Trust also undertakes charitable activities to provide relief to the needy.

I am informed that renowned scholars are participating in the projected Seminar. Needless to say, the discussions at this Seminar would go a long way in further enhancing a meaningful understanding of Kashmir Shaivism.

I compliment Ishwar Ashram Trust for organizing the Seminar and wish success to its various endeavours.

(N. N. Vohra)

13th September, 2013
Srinagar.

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8 September 2013

MESSAGE FROM GURUDEV SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR

Today, after numerous inventions and discoveries over the last several centuries, modern science is arriving at the understanding of Oneness of everything or Non Duality, which has been declared by the philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism long ago. Its texts and the practices explained in them are a great treasure of mystical knowledge to arrive at a direct experience of this truth. I have myself given a series of commentaries on the Shiva Sutras.

I am very happy that a seminar on Kashmir Shaivism is being organized by Ishwar Ashram Trust, bringing eminent scholars on the subject from around the world. I send my blessings for its success.

SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR

सत्यमेव जयते

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
RAJYA SABHA
(UPPER HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT)

Dr. Karan Singh

PRESIDENT
INDIAN COUNCIL FOR
CULTURAL RELATIONS
(ICCR)

MESSAGE

On the occasion of the International Seminar on Kashmir Shavism, being held by the Ishwar Ashram Trust in Srinagar, I send the organisers as well as all the participants my warm fraternal greetings.

Kashmir Shavism represents a unique component of our multi-faceted philosophical and spiritual heritage. Developed over the centuries it produced, among others, one of the greatest Indian philosophers Acharya Abhinavagupta whose seminal text 'Tantraloka' remain a unique contribution to what is known as the 'Trika Philosophy'. Regretfully, the study of Kashmir Shavism is not as widespread as it should be. I had always hoped that the Kashmir University would pay special attention to this branch of Philosophy which was born and grew up in this beautiful valley.

The Ishwar Ashram Trust worked effectively to celebrate the Birth Centenary of the late Swami Lakshman Joo, the last great Acharya of the Kashmir Shaiva tradition. It is important that his legacy should be kept alive so that, in due course, another Acharya could emerge to take his place. Our whole heritage revolves around the continuous passing on (Parampara) of our many traditions I commend the Ishwar Ashram Trust for their efforts in this regard.

KARAN SINGH

Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Azad Bhavan, Indraprastha Estate, New Delhi-110002
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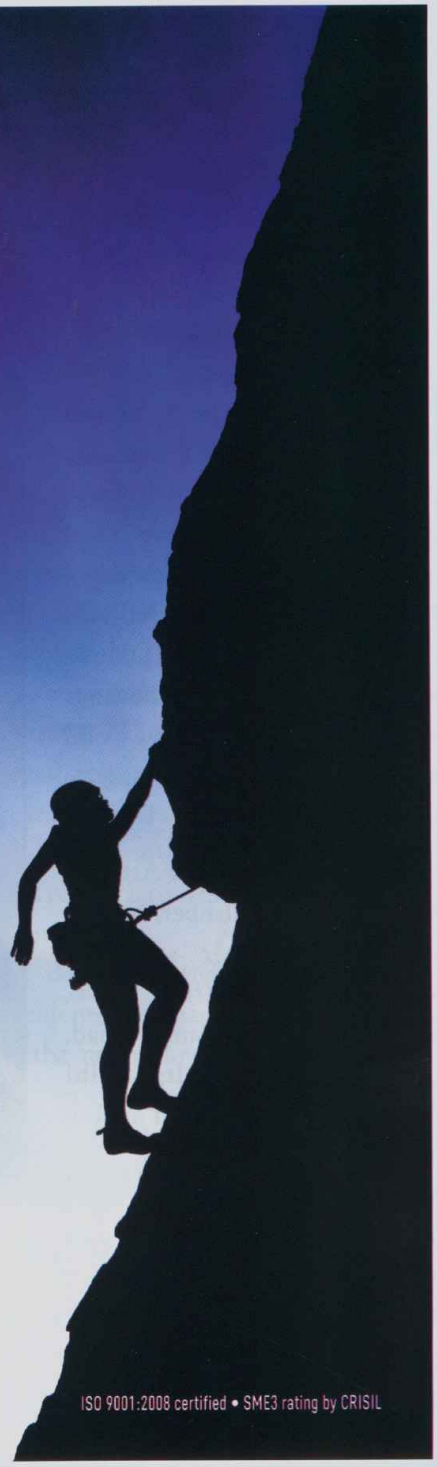

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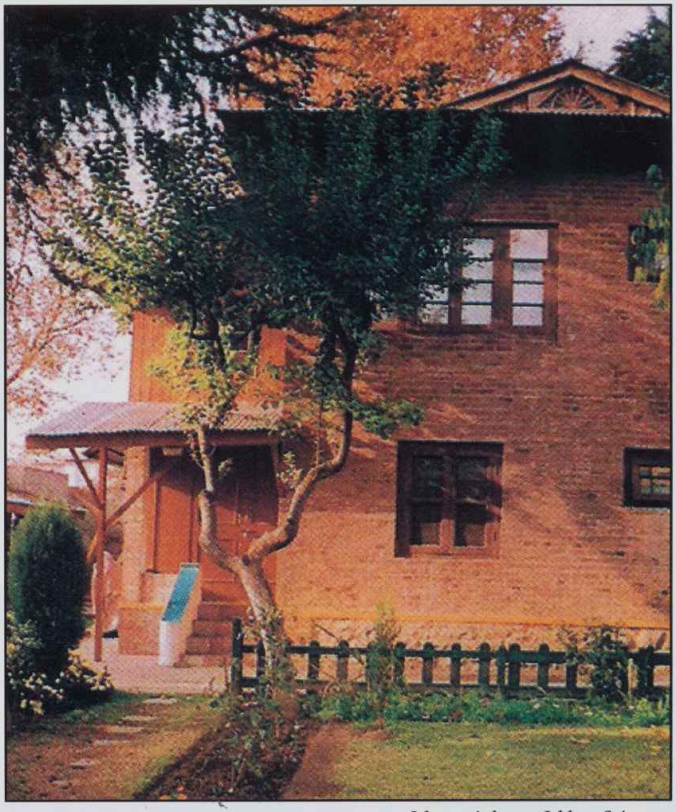
The Ishwar Ashram Trust

Aims & Objectives

In accordance with the Will of Shri Swami Lakshman Joo Raina and the codicil thereto dated 8th December, 1984 (registered on 22nd December, 1984), the ISHWAR ASHRAM TRUST was established at Gupta Ganga, Ishber, Srinagar, Kashmir with centres at Jammu and Delhi on 4thMay, 1992' with following:

The registered office of the Trust is located at Ishwar Ashram, P.O. Brein, Village Ishber, Nishat, Srinagar, Kashmir with its Administrative Office at 2, Mohinder Nagar, Canal Road, R.O. Tawi, Jammu. Its Delhi Chapter Office is situated at R-5, Pocket D at Sarita Vihar, New Delhi 110049. The Trust shall have' its offices/centres located all over the country and abroad as the Trustees may, in the interest of Trust, so decide, from time to time. A Kendra of the Trust has been established at Mumbai.



Ishwar Ashram, Ishber, Srinagar

Objectives of the Trust

Among the major objectives of the Trust, the following merit special attention:

- To establish, run and maintain centres for the propagation of KASHMIR

SHAIVISM as propounded and followed by Shri Swamiji at Ishwar Ashram, Ishber, Srinagar, Kashmir and at such other place/places as may be decided by the Trust,

- To create, establish, run and maintain place/places as Centre/Centres of Meditation, Discourses, Meetings, Satsangs etc.
- To acquire, purchase, publish, print, buy and sell, books, publications of Shaiva philosophy, to make, purchase, issue and sell audio and video cassettes on thoughts and philosophy of Swamiji and to organize lectures, recitations, photographic displays, discourses and related literature on philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism as propounded by Swamiji and other saintly personalities.
- To organise periodical prayer meetings, Havans, Yajnyas, Bandaras, Pujas, Satsangs in accordance with the periodicity and practices in vougue in Ishwar Ashram during the life time of Swamiji at such Ashram and other places as may be thought fit to be expedient for accessibility of the devotees and fulfillment of the objectives of the trust.
- To print, publish, circulate or otherwise make known or propagate the teachings of Shiva Philosophy of Kashmir in all its dimensions by means of publications, e.g. periodicals, magazines, handouts, pamphlets, advertisements, books, souvenirs, audio cassettes, video cassettes and such other means of communication as may be expedient.
- To preach, publish, advertise, propagate in every manner possible, the virtues of harmony, mutual goodwill, peace, tranquility and austerity amongst the devotees without distinction of religion, caste, creed, colour and sex.
- To organise the meetings of the devotees of Swamiji without any restrictions on account of religion, caste, colour, creed, sex, nationality and to encourage continuous and harmonious interaction amongst the devotees.
- To preach, propagate and encourage or otherwise enforce the adherence to vegetarianism and abstinence from drugs, narcotics and alcohol.
- To set up scholarships to enable deserving persons without the distinction of caste, creed, religion and sex for pursuance and research in Kashmir Shaiva philosophy and for advancement of such knowledge and research to attain the objectives of the Trust.
- To do such other things as may be incidental or ancillary to the attainment of the main objectives of the Trust. For further details of the objectives and management of finances and other matters, reference may please be made to the Trust Deed and Rules and Regulation of the Trust.

Ishwarswaroop Swami Lakshmanjoo

A brief life-sketch

Kashmir Shaivism, as non-dual Shaivism is generally known, is a unique philosophical and theological system rooted in Tantric world-view. What distinguishes it is its monistic vision which conceives the Highest Reality in terms of one pure consciousness vibrating in every atom of the universe. This universal consciousness, which it calls Parama Shiva, is an all-pervading principle that forms the ground and substratum of all existent things, the phenomenal world with all its diversity being but its manifestation or expression. It is realization of his true nature as Shiva that liberates man from the shackles of finitude that bind him. Kashmir Shaivism, however, is not mere speculation or an intellectual exercise about exploring the nature of reality but a unique synthesis of theory and practice, with speculation being constantly fed and nourished by practice.

The history of this life-affirmative philosophy goes back to the sage Durvasa and his mind-born sons in hoary antiquity. In historical times proper its preceptorial lineages can be traced to great masters like Vasugupta, Somananda, Utapala Deva, Abhinavagupta, Kshemaraja, Jayaratha, Yogaraja, Bhaskarkantha, Shivopadhyaya. Nearer our own times, Swami Manakak, Swami Ramji and Swami Mahtab Kak kept alive this great spiritual tradition. Swami Lakshamanjoo, disciple of Swami Mahtab Kak and grand-disciple of Swami Ramji and known to his numerous devotees and disciples all over the world as Ishwarswaroop or Shiva-incarnate, was the greatest exponent of the principles and practice of non-dual Shaivism in the modern-day world. Clad in a flowing Kashmiri robe, with his tall and graceful figure, his, majestic bearing, his face glowing with an inner radiance, his eyes brimming with compassion, he embodied in his person the system in its full splendour.

Many were the similarities that Swami Lakshmanjoo had with the great Abhinavagupta. He interpreted Abhinava's thought to the modern world in a manner that no one else has done. Bringing out Kashmir Shaivism from the confines of the initiated few, he spread its vibrant message across the mountains of Kashmir to the whole world.

Swamiji was born on May 9, 1907, to Pandit Narayan Das Raina, an affluent entrepreneur who first introduced houseboats in Kashmir, and his wife Arnimal at Namchibal, a locality in downtown Srinagar. The word guru in Sanskrit

Swamiji's parents

'means 'one who dispels darkness' and his birth was surely one of the greatest events in the spiritual history of modern times, a sunrise that filled the world with its immense effulgence. And who knew it better than Swami Ramji, a great Shaiva master and the kulaguru of the Raina family. He danced with joy, holding the newborn babe in his arms, although he had lost the use of his legs due to sitting for long hours in meditation.

From the beginning it became evident that Lakshman a name given to Swamiji by Swami Ramji himself was a precocious child with marked inclination towards spirituality. When he was just three, he used to make Shivalingas out of clay as his play. At five he would sit in meditation and go into trance. He started fainting so frequently that his worried parents took him to Swami Ramji for help, but Ramji assured them that nothing was wrong with the child. Swamiji's sacred thread ceremony was performed along with that of his brothers when he was six years old. The sacrament was supervised by Swami Ramji himself strictly according to the Shaiva tradition of Kashmir. Swamiji's elder brother, Maheshwar Nath was also a disciple of Swami Ramji and used to perform strenuous spiritual practice under his guidance, inspiring Swamiji himself, but he passed away in 1915. Soon afterwards Swami Ramji also attained mahāsamādhi. He had closely monitored the spiritual progress of Swami Lakshmanjoo till he was seven and now he entrusted him to the charge of Swami Mahatab Kak ji, one of his main disciples. The house where Swami Lakshmanjoo was imparted instruction in Sanskrit and Kashmir Shaiva texts is located in the Fateh Kadal locality of

Swami Ramji singing and dancing on Swami Lakshman joo's birth - a sketch

Swami Ramji

Swami Mahtab Kak

Srinagar. It was this house where Swami Ramji established the Swami Ram Trika Shaiva Ashram. The Ashram continues function to this day, though much as a memorial to the master.

In the meantime Pandit Narayan Das sent him for his early schooling to a school in the neighbourhood. But bright though he was as a student he was not cut out for mere conventional learning in the three R's. His interest lay in acquiring a different kind of knowledge. He would go to the school with his prayer mat in his school bag and sit in meditation in the classroom itself. When an inquisitive teacher asked him about it, the boy Lakshman replied that he could see the badi-bod, He who is greater than the greatest, with his eyes closed. But another teacher punished him for indiscipline when he found him singing bhajans. But Swamiji had to give up school before completing his matriculation when his father fell ill and asked him, and other sons, to share the responsibilities of the family business of houseboat construction.

At thirteen, his parents started looking for a suitable bride for him, as was the custom those days. But Lakshamanjoo would have none of it as he was not interested in marriage at all but in spiritual realization and remaining absorbed in God- consciousness. "I am wedded to God", he told them. Pestered, he stealthily left his home for Sadhu Ganga, a holy place known as Sādamālyun in Kashmiri. A frantic search was launched for him but he agreed to return only on solemn assurance

Brahmachari Lakshman with Maharshi Raman

by Swami Mahatab Kak that he would not be troubled for marrying and a separate house would be built for him to carry on his spiritual practice. Pandit Narayan Das Raina built a two-storey house for him in 1926 in the Namchibal locality of Fatehkadal, Srinagar, near his own factory where he for seven continuous years he remained engaged in spiritual practice following instructions of his master Swami Mahtab Kak even as he studied seminal texts of non-dual Shaivism and took lessons in Sanskrit grammar from Pandit Maheshwar Nath Razdan, an erudite scholar of the times, to achieve mastery over the language. The house at Namchibal saw Swami Lakshmanjoo's scholarship and sainthood achieve a full efflorescence. Spiritual aspirants started thronging to him for guidance.

The first fruit of Swamiji's scholarship appeared in the shape of his book *on Bhagvad Gītārthasaṁgraha*, Abhinavagupta's unique commentary on the *Bhagvad Gītā* from a Shaivite perspective, in 1933. This was also the time when his well known disciple Sharika Devi, and later her sister Prabha Devi, started coming to him for instruction in Shaiva doctrine and practice. But the house at Namichabal was proving to be too much of a distraction because of being located in the busy centre of the city. A search for a more secluded place led to a peaceful site on the spur of a mountain at Ishber near the Nishat Garden and his father constructed an *ashram* for him there by the side of a murmuring stream. It was perhaps somewhere in these very environs that Abhinavagupta, the greatest Shaiva thinker, too had lived about a thousand years ago. Swamiji moved to the place in 1934 and it became a centre from where his teachings on Kashmir Shaiva philosophy attracted people from far and wide.

With old age catching up with them, Swamij's parents, Pandit Narayan Das Raina and Arnimal, too came to live with him in the house. As their health was declining they now needed someone to look after them with tender care and this Swamiji did in abundant measure. But despite all the care that he took of them, both the parents departed from this world, bidding goodbye to the son they so dearly loved. First his mother Arnimal departed in June 1947 after a brief illness, and then his father Narayan Das followed her in January 1948. Earlier, in 1943, Swamiji's guru Swami Mahtab Kak had attained *mahāsamādhi*. And for all his equipoise Swami Lakshmanjoo for once felt deeply sad.

As the crowd of devotees and seekers coming to visit him started growing, Swamiji started looking for more spacious and better approachable place for his ashram. With a close disciple offering a large piece of land close by, Swamiji built a new ashram complex sprawling over the Zabarvan foothills and shifted there in 1960. Located in picturesque surroundings, a stone's throw away from the well-known pilgrimage place of Gupt Ganga, it was named Ishwar Ashram after him, Swamiji himself being called Ishwaswaroop as a mark of reverence. The old ashram now came to be called "God's House". On the first floor of this new small brick and wood building, were Swamiji's meditation and

Swami Lakshman Joo and Maharshi Mahesh Yogi

bedroom. He used to descend the stairs of his suite of rooms and often come to the balcony, his favourite place in the building, where he would love to sit in a reclining chair and give darshan to his devotees.

Swami Lakshman Joo with Swami Muktananda

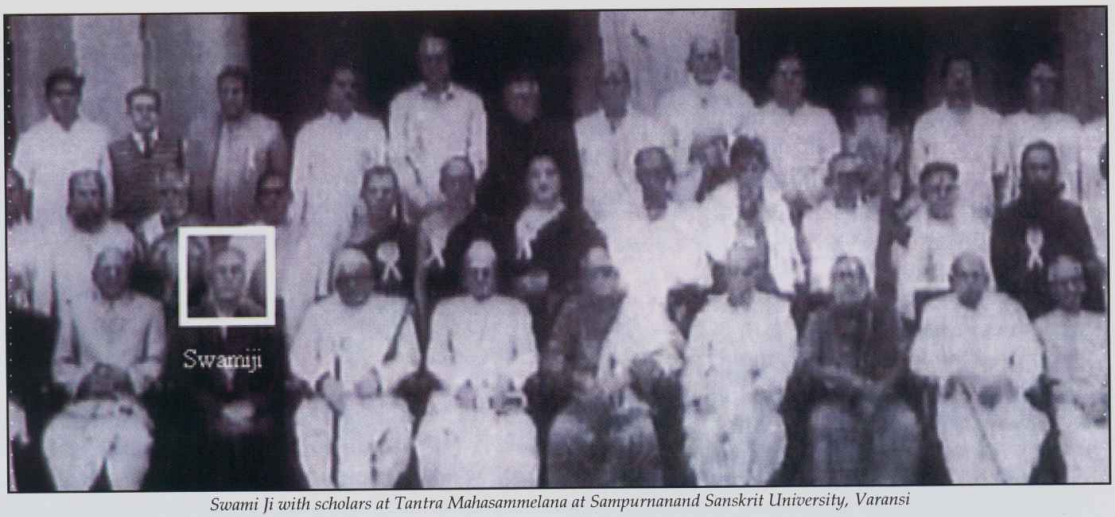
Many years before that, when the mystique of Swami Lakshmanjoo's spiritual attainments had just started to spread, he thought of connecting himself to a circuit of celebrated saints of India. Still in his twenties, and known only as Brahmachari Lakshman Raina yet, he silently set out for Thiruvannamalai to meet Maharshi Raman, the great sage of Arunachalam. As he saw him in his serene spiritual glory, Swamiji was overwhelmed and went into a trance. Staying in Raman Ashram for about a fortnight, Swamiji would go to the Arunachalam Hill and sit on a rock near Raman Maharshi. "Those were golden days for me", he used to say. After he returned to his from there, charged with ebullient energy, he acquired a greater awareness of the mission he was to undertake.

His soul-connection with mystics and saints further strengthened after he established the Ishwar Ashram at Ishber. Maharshi Mahesh Yogi called on him at the Ashram during his visit to Kashmir in 1964 along with a large retinue of his followers, including the Beatles. Swamiji gave an enlightening discourse to the group on *Vijñāna Bhairava*, which greatly impressed Maharshi Mahesh Yogi who later made it a point to visit Swamiji during his summer visits to Kashmir over the next five years. So great was the impact of these meetings with Swamiji on his disciples that some of them, like John and Denise Hughes, and later George Barlesaar, decided to devote themselves totally to the study of Kashmir Shaivism at the feet of Swamiji. This was the beginning of their life-long relationship as disciples with him.

Swami Ji and his disciples with Swami Shivananda at Rishikesh

Among other saints and spiritual leaders on Swamiji's circuit were Swami Muktananda of Siddha Yogapitha, Shri Balkrishen Das, a much revered saint of Vrindavan, and Swami Ranganathananda of Shri Ramakrishna Mission. With all them he developed very intimate spiritual relationships. Two other spiritual persons who met Swami Lakshmanjoo for spiritual exchanges of thought at Ishber were Pandit Swami Nilakanthananda Shastri and Pandit Sat Ram Bhat, both his contemporaries and close friends but belonging to a different end of the spectrum of spiritual thought. Rishikesh was one of the favourite spiritual retreats of Swamiji. Here during one of his visits he met, along with a large number of his devotees, one of the most dynamic spiritual leaders of the times, Swami Shivananda, the famous founder of the Divine Life Society. Swami Shivananda would often call Swamiji "the Lion of Kashmir Shaivism".

Meanwhile an extraordinary phenomenon was taking place at Ishwar Ashram, Ishber, unfolding unknown dimensions of Swami Lakshmanjoo's spirituality and inner vision. A great resurgence of the non-dual tradition of Shaivism was set into motion by SwamiJi which was gaining momentum through his lectures, talks and Sunday classes on different aspects related to it, expositions on *Tantrāloka, Paramārthsāra, Śivastotrāvalī, Bhagvadgītārthasaṁgraha, Parātriśikā Vivaraṇa, Īśvarapratyabhijñā Vimarśinī, Śiva Sūtras, Vijñānabhairava, Sāmbapañcāśikā, Bodhapañcāśikā* and other texts of the system as well as practical instructions about spiritual practice. Special discourses were held for those interested in



Swami Ji with scholars at Tantra Mahasammelana at Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, Varansi

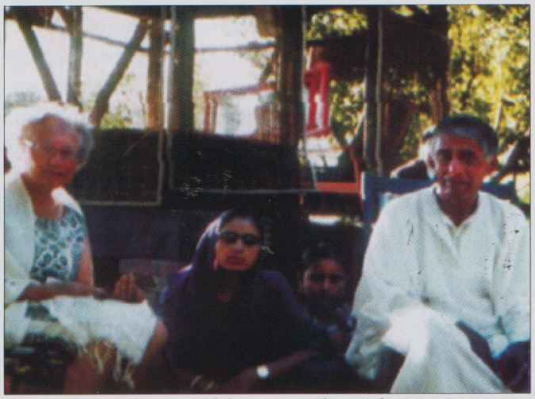
specialised study. Swamiji would interpret the Shaiva texts in his own inimitable style, reciting the ślokas, explaining their literal meaning and then unfolding their deeper meaning. He would prefer to speak to the local audience in native Kashmiri, or Hindi, making even the most abstruse point look easy and simple. He never hesitated to answer any knotty question or remove any doubt in the minds of those who came to him. Swamiji would be overwhelmed with emotion while reciting from Utpaldeva's *Śivastotrāvalī*. He spoke with equal ease in English to his foreign students. His mastery over the Sanskrit language, vast knowledge of the Shaiva texts, together with his unique experience of living the truths contained in them lived made him the most authentic voice of Kashmir Shaivism.

The country came to know how great a scholar of the Tantric tradition Swami Lakshamanjoo was when he took part in the All India Tantra Mahāsammelan at the Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, Varanasi, in which the topmost scholarship of Tantra in India was participating. Taking the learned gathering by storm, Swamiji presented a paper in Sanskrit entitled *Kuṇḍalinī Vijñāna Rahasyam*. The organisers of the Mahāsammelan were so impressed by depth and range of his knowledge of Tantra that they conferred an honorary degree of D. Lit. on him.

The event created such a strong impact on the scholastic circles of Varanasi that, later, a host of scholars from that world renowned centre of Sanskrit learning and Hindu studies came to him seeking to enhance their understanding of Kashmir Shaiva philosophy. One of them was Thakur Jaidev Singh, the acclaimed translator of a number of Kashmir Shaiva texts. In one work after another he acknowledged his indebtedness to Swamiji for his translations with words like, "He opened my eyes".

Acharya Rameshwar Jha, also a scholar of considerable reputation, was constantly in search of someone who could bestow on him what he lacked God-consciousness. When he came to know about Swami Lakshamanjoo, he rushed to him from Varanasi and found enlightenment at his feet. Overwhelmed by devotion, the great scholar wrote a beautiful hymn in praise of Swami Lakshmanjoo, which is today chanted by his numerous devotees regularly at all the centres of Ishwar Ashram Trust.

Swami Ji and Swami Ranganathanda at Kashmir Institute of Shaivism, Gupt Ganga



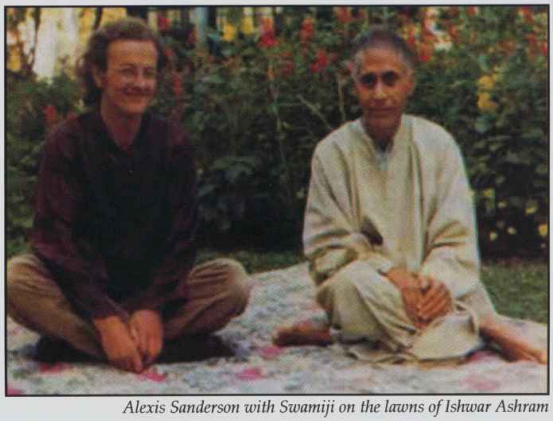
Lillian Silburn with Swami Lakshman Joo at Ishwar Ashram.

As if drawn by a powerful magnet, seekers and aspirants, students and scholars came to him in ever greater numbers to learn at his feet. His brilliant expositions helped them fathom the oceanic depths of the sacred texts non-dual Shaiva philosophy and understand its fundamental doctrines and concepts. The West had some of the first intimations of Swamiji's greatness as a philosopher and a spiritualist through Paul Reps' book *Zen Flesh Zen Bones* which has a chapter from Swamiji on "centring" based on the *Vijñāna Bhairava Tantra*. As the image of Swami Lakshmanjoo as the greatest living master of both oral and textual traditions of non-dual Shaivism, flashed on the mind-screens of the people, serious scholars of Tantra and Śaivāgama from different parts of the world started making a beeline to his Ashram at Ishber for better insights into the system. From France, a distinguished scholar of Tantra at the Centre National de la Researche Scientifique, Late Lillian Silburn came as early as 1948 and studied with Swamiji for an overall period of twenty years with a deep sense of dedication.

Another eminent French scholar of Tantra and Kashmir Shaivism, Andre Padoux came with Silburn in 1958 and 1959 to study Abhinavagupta's commentary on Parātriśikā. To him Swamiji was "certainly the last depository of the teaching of Trika, as it was transmitted from master to disciple for centuries." In 1974, Alice Christensen, a spiritual seeker came all the way from Florida, USA to visit Swami Lakshmanjoo. The encounter was so uplifting spiritually that she continued to visit him every summer till he left his mortal coil. She interviewed him about his life and different aspects of Kashmir Shaivism and made a film on her conversations with him between 1977 and 1986 along with publishing them in book form. The conversations, according to her, are a "lasting treasure" for all those interested in Swamiji's teachings.

Among other well known foreign and Indian scholars who had the opportunity to study with Swamiji were Alexis Sanderson, Harvey P. Alper, Mark S.G. Dyczkowski, Lance N. Nelson, Parmahans Mishra, Prof. Jia Lal Kaula (who also wrote a hymn in praise of Swamiji), Prof. Nilakanth Gurtu, John Hughes, Dr. Karan Singh, Prof. Janaki Nath Kaul 'Kamal', Prof. P.N.Pushp and Prof. M.L. Kokiloo.

For decades on Swamiji continued through his discourses in Kashmiri for the local devotees and Hindi and English for others, and also through his writings, to interpret Shaiva foundational and exegetical texts to people. After commentary on the *Bhagvadgītārtha Saṁgraha* in 1933, *Kramanaya Pradīpikā*, a work on the Krama system, was published in 1958. Then came his commentary on Utpaldeva's Śivastotrāvalī in 1964, both the works being in Hindi. He also wrote a compendium on the Trika philosophy in Hindi under the title *Trikaśāstra Rahasya Prakriyā*, which has now been published by the Ishwar Ashram Trust in Swamiji's own beautiful calligraphic handwriting. For his English knowing disciples too, Swamiji gave lectures on some of the most important texts of Kashmir Shaivism, translating them and explaining their secrets in a very lucid manner. From 1972 to 1985 these lectures were tape-recorded by John Hughes, a close disciple of his, and painstakingly compiled,



Alexis Sanderson with Swamiji on the lawns of Ishwar Ashram

edited and published by him in book form. These include the Śiva Sūtras, *Bhagavadgītārtha Saṁgraha, Bodhapañcāśikā, Vijñāna Bhairava* and *Parāpraveśikā*. The great "philosopher saint" is also the author of a comprehensive book on different aspects of Kashmir Shaivism entitled *Kashmir Shaivism: the Secret Supreme*. Written primarily for some of his Western disciples, the book comprises a series of his lectures on the system. The popularity of the book can be gauged from the fact that it has run into several editions after it was first printed in 1985.

In 1969, Swamiji established the Kashmir Institute of Shaivism in the premises of Shri Ranbir Shiva Temple at Gupta Ganga, Srinagar, a stone's throw away from Ishber. This became a venue for Swamiji's weekly discourses, and also seminars and lectures besides yajñas on specific occasions. It was here that Swamiji delivered his famous lectures on meditative practices and spiritual discipline, which were published in book form in 1980 under the title Talks on Practice and Discipline. In this book he comes out as a strong supporter of vegetarianism who abhorred senseless slaughter of animals for the purpose of eating their flesh and condemned it in strongest terms. A national seminar on Kashmir Shaivism was sponsored here by ICPR in 1987 in which top scholars of the country took part.

A temple dedicated to Amriteshvara Bhairava, the deity who showers upon his devotees the nectar of the bliss of *samāveśa* or absorption, was constructed by Swamiji inside the premises of Ishwar Ashram in 1983. A holy lingam representing the deity was installed by him in a ceremony marked by tremendous devotional fervour and enthusiasm. Swamiji himself directed and participated in every sacred ritual of its consecration, hoisting the temple's flag amidst loud chants of "*Om juṁ saḥ Amṛteśvara Bhairavāya namaḥ*!"

Besides being a great saint and scholar, Swamiji, true to his Shaiva instincts, was also a connoisseur of music and art. The musical rendering of the *Śivastotravalī* would often bring tears to his eyes, while watercolour Kashmir landscape paintings of D. N. Wali would give him great aesthetic pleasure. He was also a great lover of nature and supporter of environmental preservation, as the carefully manicured green lawns of his Ashram with flowers of all hues blooming shows in ample measure. He would often take his devotees on excursions to scenic spots in Kashmir and to prominent places of pilgrimage and worship in and even outside Kashmir to acquaint them with the country's sacred geography. Communion with serene and calm nature could well mean communion with the divine, he felt.

Towards the end of 1989 and beginning of 1990, Pakistan-sponsored terrorist violence erupted in Kashmir, disrupting life and bringing death and disaster to the Valley. Genocidal attacks and barbarities unleashed by the terrorists forced the minority community of Kashmir to flee from homes and hearths and become refugees in their own country. Swamiji was deeply anguished by the developments and tried to dissuade the Pandits from leaving Kashmir. He personally offered protection to many in his Ashram, but could not prevent the exodus from taking place.

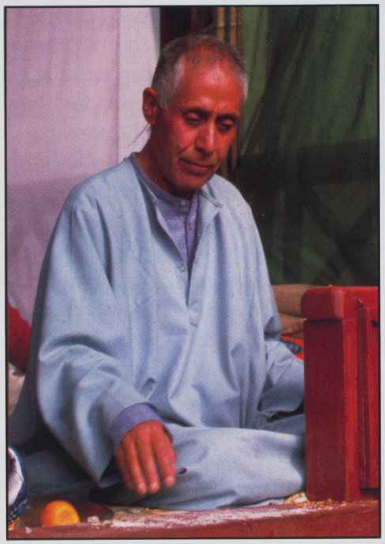
Just about that time a great change came over in Swamiji's mood and he said that he had entered the Parabhairava state. He was in the ecstatic Parabhairava state when he visited Kathmandu, Nepal, along with some of his disciples in 1990. Here he delivered a series of lectures on Abhinavagupta's Tantrasāra and Gītārthasaàgraha. On Feb.2, 1991 his principal disciple Sharika Devi passed away, which made him very sad. After consigning her ashes in the Ganga at Hardwar, Swamiji left for United States in March 1991 to meet his American disciples John and Denise Hughes. The Parabhairava mood continued to prevail there.

Outwardly Swamiji gave no inkling at that time but he was apparently physically unwell. On his return he was in a bad shape physically. He fell ill and was taken to AIIMS, New Delhi for treatment. He spent the last days of his earthly existence at NOIDA. Even though he was in great physical pain his face continued to glow and his mind was alert as ever. Early in the morning on September 27, 1991, Swami Lakshmanjoo attained mahāsamādhi and became one with Parama Shiva. For the 84 years of his life on the earth he was adored for spiritual greatness by men and women of every status and age. His disciples and devotees all over the world feel that he is still guiding them at every step of their life.

Four Schools of Thought in Kashmir Shaivism

A discourse by Ishwarswaroop Swami Lakshman Joo

This is based on one of the several discourses given by Ishwarswroop Swami Lakshmanjoo during the period 1972-1984. The original text of the discourse is in Kashmiri. We are presenting here its English translation by **Samvit Prakash Dhar.**



Long after Sage Durvasa was first initiated into Shaivism by Lord Shiva on Mount Kailash, the Lord felt the need of explaining it in still greater detail in order to make it easily understandable to larger masses of spiritual seekers of varying intellectual levels and occupational pursuits. This caused Lord Shiva to re-incarnate himself in the form of four successive masters in Kaliyuga, namely (1) Somanandanatha, (2) Airakanatha, (3) Vasugupta and (4) Shambunatha[1] - the Guru of Abhinavagupta, the last in the lineage of masters of Kashmir Shaivism (also known as Trika Philosophy) of the mediaeval times. All these masters assumed human forms only for our benefit, for our spiritual enlightenment which alone guarantees liberation from the vicious circle of transmigration and total deliverance from sufferings attending thereon.

Shri Somanandanatha was the first and the foremost to teach the Pratyabhijñā School of Thought, the highest within the Trika system of philosophy (more popularly known as Kashmir Shaivism). This system is best suited to seekers with higher intellectual level and purity of mind. The Pratyabhijñā system rests basically on the principle of recognition -- recognition of perfect identity of the individual soul i.e. *jīva* with the Highest Ultimate Reality i.e Shiva. *Jīva* is none other than the peerless Shiva himself who, in his state of exuberance of bliss (*ānanda*) has, of his own sovereign will (*svātantrya*) manifested himself in the multitude of forms, each with distinctly different characteristics in terms of powers as well as functions, Shiva in his manifest form (in immanence) assuming limited powers and functions characteristic of *jīva*, retaining at the same time his Transcendental Nature.

The Pratyabhijñā system does not advocate the methods and means of *vikalpa kṣaya* (eradication of thought constructs or withdrawal of senses of perception from their respective objects of perception) nor does it endorse the adoption of techniques which lead to the expansion of powers of perception in terms of their range and depth to experience thereby their innate universal character. Instead the individual needs directly to recognise his true universal nature i.e. his identity with the Highest Reality and to Be It. Being it implies directly to recognize his true nature i.e. Supreme Consciousness and to instantaneously resume the powers as well as functions characteristic of Lord Shiva. The former consist of Lord Shiva's (i) *cit śakti* (supreme consciousness) (ii) *ānanda śakti* (infinite bliss) (iii) *ichhā śakti* (sovereign will), (iv) *jñāna śakti* (omniscience) and (v) *kriyā śakti* (omnipotence), whereas the latter, comprise of his five universal functions (*pañca kṛtya*) namely (a) creation of the phenomenal world (*sṛṣṭi*), (b) Sustenance thereof (*sthiti*), (c) its dissolution (*saṁhāra*), (d) the concealment of his true nature (*pidhāna*) and (e) the Revealing of his true nature (*anugraha*) e.g. oneness of the manifest world of objects and the transcendental aspects of his supreme consciousness. In other words it amounts to

remaining stay-put in the full awareness of one's real nature (*pañca kṛtya anusaraṇa*). Once that happens, you are there. There is nothing else to do. If every moment you are aware of what you are doing, you are there. You have to closely watch your own thought process and get used to identify the moments when a new thought - construct arises (initial act of creation), how long it continues (sustenance) in terms of its depth and detail and when it terminates (that is identifying the moment of its dissolution -- *saṁhāra*) i.e. when in the process of perceiving, the subjective awareness disappears and when the same reappears. In each and every act of this world one has to closely watch the moments of replication of the five-fold acts (*pañca kṛtya*) of Lord Shiva. In course of time, one will realize that he has not suffered any loss of glory in terms of God-consciousness, be it lordly powers or universal functions. This is taught in *Pratyabhijñā* School of Kashmir Shaivism. This is *Śāmbhava upāya*. This school does not recognise *Śākta upāya* nor *āṇava upāya*. It transcends all means and methods. *Pratyabhijñāna* rests on the basic principle of recognition of absolute identity of man and God. All means and methods are redundant here[2].The perfect identity between the two (i.e. *jīva* -- the limited being or the soul-in-bondage and *paramātman*) leaves no room for any impurities in the so-called *jīva* who is none other than Shiva Himself. The so-called impurities have no independent existence to be able to cause any impediments.

While explaining the *pratyabhijñā śastra*[3], founded by his own Guru Shri Somananda, in his own commentary called *Vimarśinī*, Shri Utpala Deva quotes a typical illustration of *pratyabijñā* as described here. Think of a young maiden of marriageable age, whose marriage has already been fixed with someone possessing suitable family background, educational achievements and other enviable qualities. She has, without seeing or meeting the would-be spouse, developed passionate love for him. Both may even be in correspondence through letters or through personal messengers. Imagine a situation when, by chance, the two meet somewhere (like a place of pilgrimage or any public place). Even though the man of her dreams stands right before her and vice versa neither recognises the other, at least on the basis of their respective assessments through correspondence or through verbal descriptions of their physical personalities and qualities of head and heart by someone else. The meeting turns out to be just ordinary without yielding any joy or excitement characteristic of the meeting between two lovers. Suddenly someone knowing both and their anticipated relationship, turns up on the scene and reveals their respective identities. The whole scenario changes dramatically. Their hearts are flooded with joy of love; their bodies and mind experience surges of deep satisfaction and each rejoices the occasion like never before. Utpala, in his *Vimarśinī* deduces" that likewise in the case of an earnest seeker, often his own spiritual teacher provides him the necessary inspiration at the super of the moment, which makes him identify and enjoy those blessed occurrences of boundless peace and transcendence. That is how the principle of *pratyabhijñā* operates. This very principle has been explained in *pratyabhijñā śāstra* of Kashmir Shaivism by Shri Somananda. This approach to reality is, however, applicable to only those spiritual seekers, who have the highest ability and need not resort to any particular *upāyas* (means or methods). For such people, however, who need resort to one or the other specific upāyas because they are relatively less qualified in terms of purity of mind and intellect, they are recommended to adopt other means or paths.

For the next below grade of *sādhakas*, i.e. those not qualified for *pratyabhijñāna*, Lord Shankara has assumed the form of Kula system. The Kula system propounds the thought of totality of energies, which in turn, is based mostly on *Śāṁbhava upāya* and to a lesser extent on *śākta upāya*, the former being more predominant. Briefly this system advocates the technique of 'yoga in action' explained by me on a previous occasion. This approach of Kula system does not envisage retreating into solitude like chosen places of meditation, shutting of all lights, resorting to *prāṇayāmas* (practising of breath control) and thereby enjoy induced moments of quietude popularly known as *samādhi*. The school of Kula system was first established by Macchandanatha for those not suited out-right for *Śāṁbhava upāya*, let alone qualified for pratyabhijñā.

Kula stands for totality of energies. For example when a person is busy listening to someone's voice or say music, he cannot simultaneously talk to someone else nor can he undertake other activities

like discerning seriously and performing other tasks simultaneously with same efficiency. The Kula system precisely teaches how one can deploy all his organs of action and senses of perception at the same time with maximum efficiency as is characteristic of Lord Shiva, who is all-pervading. The tongue will continue talking as well as tasting food and analysing the same, smelling various fragrances and distinguishing each from the other through his nose, perceiving various objects with his eyes at the same time and keep track of other events like touch through his skin and sense of tactility -- all at the same time. This involves mastering the art of maximizing the efficiency of all sense perceptions and organs of action simultaneously with full awareness of one's real nature. That ensures establishment in 'yoga of action'. Remember the quote "*Sarvaḥ śakti cetasya darśanāt yaḥ yoga pathena madhyataḥ*". The Kula system thus trains a seeker to overcome the limitation of using one channel of energy for one purpose at a time thus leading to deprivation of his inherent freedom of will, knowledge and power of action - all contrary to his true nature. The Kula system, on the contrary teaches how exactly to use all faculties at the same time and thereby release his *svātantrya śakti* to accomplish anything he desires, while remaining centered in his self awareness. This approach was initially found by Shri Macchandanatha and later on propounded in greater depth and detail by Acharya Shambunatha, the Guru of Bhagavatpada Shri Abhinavagupta Acharya. This system of Kula technique ultimately leads one to mindless state (*unmana bhāva*) where his sovereign will operates at universal level with no consideration or concern for any individual desire. They just do not exist there. Once established in that exalted state of consciousness, one experiences perfect control over totality of energies (*śakti-cakra*). This practice leads him to shed off all his limitations and to restore his full mastery of totality of energies. At his mere will he has everything at his command. Naturally one does not harbour any individual or personal desire; and universal desire is no desire. Instead it is cosmic in character and as such is mere reflection of God-consciousness. At such an advanced level, this yogi becomes qualified for *Śāṁbhava upāya*, a step lower than pratyabhijñā established yogi. This technique is also known as *viśvavyāpī yoga*.

Yet lower than the above is the Krama system of thought suited to still lower grade of spiritual seekers. Krama system essentially rests on the principle of succession or sequence, also called Krama theory. This involves investigation into how and what causes the supreme consciousness to descend to the level of limited being (i.e. *jīva* or soul-in-bondage) and his retrieval i.e. to his ascending back to his original state of glory viz. the ultimate state of reality. The principle of succession or sequence is three fold in nature and it operates in terms of space, time and form[5]. In other words the Krama system rests on these three concepts, those of space (*deśa*), time (*kāla*) and form (*rūpa*) of the object of perception. This system is also known as *Kālī Śāstra*.

The Krama system advocates deep concentration on all three concepts. For example take the case of our own breathing. One inhales a breath and then he exhales the same. One has to mark how long he breathes in (*pūraka*), how long it takes to exhale (*recaka*) and how long is the in-between pause (*kumbhaka*). This needs unbroken awareness on the part of the seeker to discern fully the natural duration of the incoming (*apāna vāyu*) and outgoing (*prāṇa vāyu*) breath and the duration times of the two in-between pauses at the commencement and termination of each of the two viz. inhalation and exhalation, which together constitute one full cycle of breath. In particular one has to develop perfect awareness of the pause time (*saṅdhi*) which provides the peep hole to the realm of pure consciousness marked with intense peace and tranquility. This practice in Krama system ultimately leads one to the state of transcendence (*akrama padavī*). Akrama pada is synonymous with Lord Shiva's state of transcendence. It is that state which is beyond space, time and form. Once one enters into that state, he virtually crosses the barriers of space, time and form. So one needs to fully understand the concepts, practice concentration on each concept, analyse their nature in terms of their range (*deśa*), duration (*kāla*) and repeatedly recognise the pause time thereby gaining entrance into the Ultimate Reality i.e. Shiva. This was first taught by Airakanatha, also known as Sivanandanatha - the author of *Śrī Kālikā Stotra*.

The Krama system is, of course, very ancient and it precedes historically the period during which pratybijñā Śastra was revealed by Shri Somananda

and later on elaborated by Shri Utpala Deva in his *Vimarśinī* on *Śiva Dṛṣṭi*. The technique of Krama is based partly on *āṇava upāya* and partly on *Śākta upāya*. The *āṇava* state lasts throughout the initial period of practice when the seeker resorts to concentration on space, time and form. Once he starts overstepping them, he automatically enters into *Śāktopāya*. When he gets firmly established in spacelessness, timelessness and formlessness, he is further elevated and becomes qualified for *Śāṁbhava upāya*.

There is yet another school of thought in Kashmir Shaivism that is ranked as fourth in order of merit viz, the Spanda School of Thought. It comprises of *Śākta* and *āṇava upāyas*. The Spanda School of Thought rests on the principle of movement -- movement forming the basis of revelation of one's nature-any kind of movement, not necessarily physical movement. Consider the case of a hand at rest. Even when it does not move it is still invested with the power of moving. If that power were not there, it would be a dead man's hand. It is obvious that though not moving externally, the power of motion exists and some movement is still going on within the veins of the hand. We are all aware that during the interval of two successive heart beats, how fast the blood rushes throughout our capillary system, though not perceived by our naked eyes. Imagine it traverses through 72,000 major and minor veins by the time the heart beats once. Thus the soul reveals its power of movement. This gets more and more clearly revealed through appropriate methods of concentration on different forms of movements making it possible to ultimately discern the changeless state of *spanda śakti*. One such illustration, often observed by us, is provided by an electric fan. Once it is switched on, the blades start rotating and at increased speeds, even though they rotate so quickly, yet the objects behind the moving blades remain distinctly clear, the blade in motion allowing full view of the still objects in the background. The Spanda system thus lays emphasis on acceleration of the sense perceptions involving movement so intensely that the underlying changeless (movementless) state of spanda comes into clearer and still clearer relief. The one-pointedness of concentration constitutes the key to our discernment of the change-less state of spanda right amidst the process of intensely fast occurring perceptions. In the case of the fan at maximum speed we clearly see only the space in which the blades move, certainly not the blades. Besides we hear the sound caused by the continuous air displacement as well as the mechanical sound of the equipment. Thus more intense the effort of concentration the greater the chances of one's entrance into yogic trance which is the state of motionlessness -- characteristic of Lord Shiva, the highest state of quietude (*nispandatā*). Thus all forms of motion (activity) like the process of sense perceptions and activities through our organs of action will ultimately get transformed into that sublime state of motionlessness and hence unbroken awareness. This system of spanda thought was evolved by Shri Vasugupta, who himself got it from Lord Shiva through the *sūtras* engraved on the huge boulder named Shankar pal.

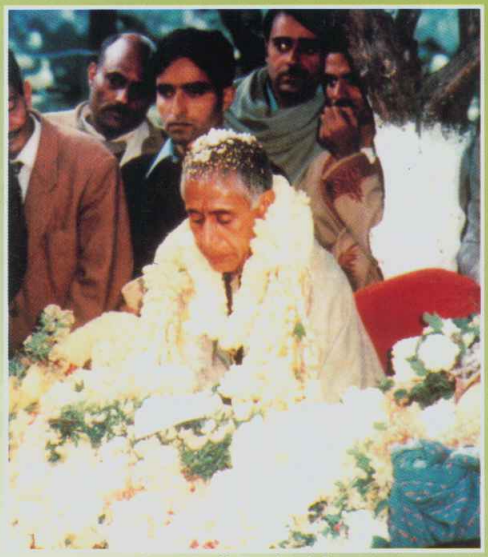
Here ends the discourse on the Four Systems of Thought in Kashmir Shaivism.

References:

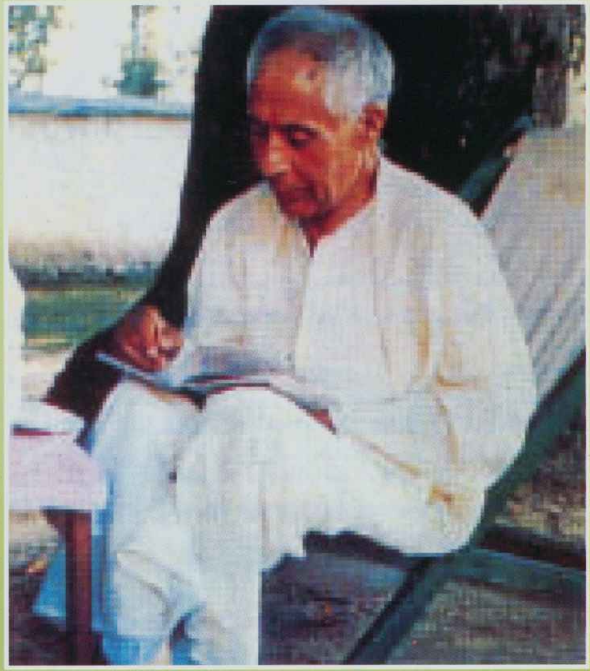
1. Initially Shri Macchandanatha established the Kula School but the credit of synthesizing and integrating it with other schools of Shaiva thought goes to Shri Shambhunatha, who initiated, inspired and guided Acharya Abhinava Gupta into the Kula System. Our revered Master Rajanaka Shri Lakshman Joo Maharaj is regarded as the last doyen of this system by most of the modern scholars of Kashmir Shaivisrn. "Kashmir Shaivism has penetrated to that depth of living thought where diverse currents of human wisdom unite in a luminous synthesis" thus claims Rabindranath Tagore. His holiness Swami Shivananda of Divine Life Society would often hail Swami Lakshman Joo as the Lion of Kashmir Shaivim and would have him address his own disciples on the tenets of Kashmir Shaivism. Shaivism seemed to hold special appeal to Swami Vivekananda also, who during his visit to Kashmir visited the great Shaiva Guru Swami Ram Ji Maharaj at latter's Ram Trika Ashram at Fateh Kadal, Srinagar, Kashmir. Our own beloved and revered Master, Shri Swami Lakshman Joo Maharaj was first initiated into Shaiva Yoga by this very Shaiva Guru, though in later years Shri Swami Mehtab Kak Ji Maharaj took over the charge of Shri Lakshman Joo on his Guru's advice.
2. The great Abhinavgupta asserts in Shri Tantrasāra, "*upāya jālaṁ na śivaṁ prakashayet, ghaṭena kiṁ bhāti sahasra dīdhatiḥ*"
3. *Śiva Dṛṣṭi*
4. तैस्तैरप्युपयाचितैरूपनतस्तन्व्याः स्थितोऽप्यन्तिके कान्तो लोकसमान एवमपरिज्ञातो न रन्तुं यथा। लोकस्यैष तथानवेक्षितगुणः स्वात्मापि विश्वेश्वरो नैवालं निजवैभवाय तदियं तत्प्ररूतमिज्ञोदिता।
   "Just as an object of love, who has been brought to the presence of a slim lady by her various entreaties, cannot give her all)' pleasure, though he may stand before her, so long as he is not recognised and, therefore, not distinguished from common man; so the self of all, which is the Lord of the world, cannot manifest its true glory so long as its essential nature is not recognised. Hence the means of its recognition has been dealt with."
5. Space, time and form thus constitute the three referal points for interpreting all human experiences which are infinitely diverse in character. It is only the confluence or the convergence of these three that resolves all differentiated experiences into single unitary experience of God - consciousness known by several names e.g. ultimate reality. Maheshwara, heart or core truth, self-realization, supreme consciousness, transcendence, ultimate bliss etc. etc.

IMAGES of GURUDEV

Brahmachari Lakshman



In samadhi on birthday



Swamiji writing

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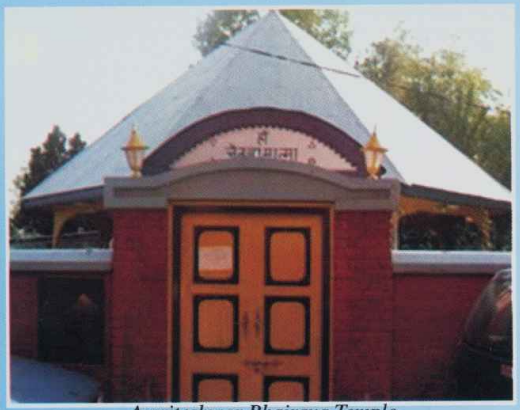


Amriteshwar Bhairava Temple

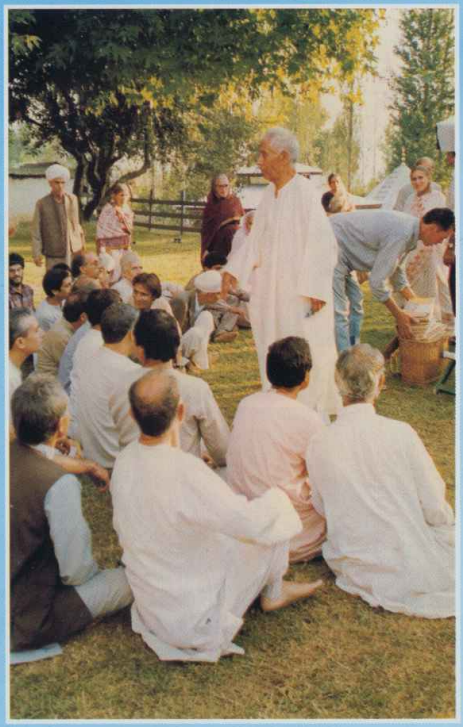
Bathing at Shankar Pal

Standing in front of Amriteshwar Temple

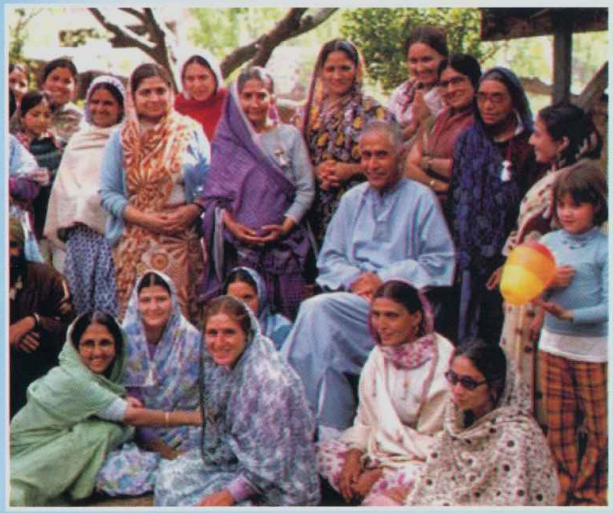
On way to Holy Amarnath Cave

IMAGES of GURUDEV

Mother Alice in conversation with Swamiji



Talking to disciples

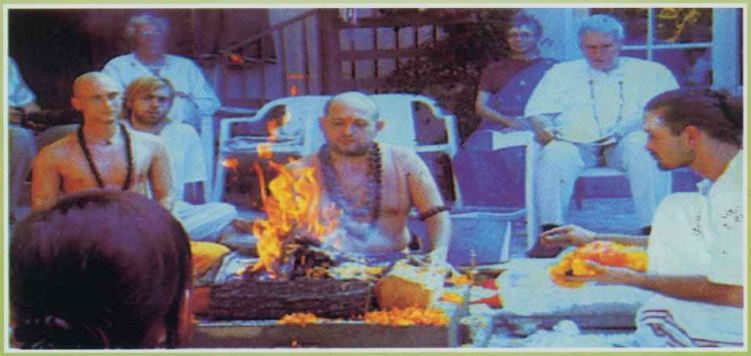


With some lady devotees

Mahanirvana Jayanti

Annual Mahāyajña

USA



Kashmir Shaivism – An Overview

– Viresh Hughes –

According to Indian thought, reality (and therefore primacy) is attributed only to that which is changeless: *Brahman* for Advaita Vedānta, *puruṣa* for *Sāṁkhya*. Consequently, the realm of change (i.e., the objective world) is systematically ignored or omitted from the realm of the Real. Trika, on the other hand, proclaims that reality must encompass both spirit and substance, arguing that the flux of creation (*sṛiṣṭi*), protection (*sthiti*) and destruction (*saṁhāra*) are held within Śiva's very own nature; they are His energies. Spanda (vibration) is the nature of His *parāmarsa śakti* (energy of being) and is described as 'movement-less movement' or 'stable movement.' That is to say, the processes of universal 'becoming' are stabilized within Lord Śiva's 'being.' All that appears to us as impermanent (creation) exists within, and not apart from, that which is permanent (God). In this manner, Trika Shaivism also considers Lord Śiva to be changeless insofar as all 'change' occurs within His own body, the objective world.

Advaita Vedānta defines reality (*Brahman*) as *sat* (absolute exist nee), *cit* (absolute consciousness) and *ānanda* (absolute bliss). According to Kashmir Shavism, Lord Śiva's defining attribute is *svātantrya śakti*, the energy of absolute freedom. As the possessor of unbounded freedom, God must encompass more than mere transcendence as Advaita Vedānta's definition can only provide. Lord Śiva is defined as *anuttara* (Absolute), whose attributes are unparalleled by any other being. Lord Śiva is understood as the possessor of innumerable energies, five of which are held in predominance. Understanding God's existence to be implicit, Kashmir Shaivism leaves aside *sat* (existence) and posits three additional defining qualities alongside the energies of *cit* and *ānanda*: the energies or absolute will (*icchā śakti*), absolute knowledge (*jñāna: śakti*) and absolute action (*kriyā śakti*). Whereas Advaita Vedānta's definition relegates God's presence to mere transcendence, Kashmir Shaivism's additional attributions engender His immanence.

Sāṁkhya-Yoga and Jainism posit the existence of innumerable souls (*puruṣa's / jīva's*) that are qualitatively identical yet somehow distinct from one another. *Puruṣa*, according to Sāṁkhya-Yoga, is devoid of any attributes save for the following: inexpressible, that which sees, isolated, indifferent, inactive spectator, autonomous, without qualities, no intelligence (because it is desireless). Jainism proclaims that every *puruṣa*, or *jīva*, is the embodiment of pure knowledge, pure perception, pure bliss and pure energy. It must be argued, however, that multiplicity without distinction is simply not possible.

Advaita Vedānta, in dealing with the improbability of a plurality of indistinct *puruṣas*, has justifiably posited a single spirit (*Brahman*) who subsumes every individual soul and as such, the individual is understood to be one with *Brahman*, possessed of absolute existence, consciousness, and bliss. The monism of Advaita Vedānta is best illustrated by Lord Kṛiṣṇa's statement in the *Bhagavad Gītā*: "I am not in them, they are in Me." (BG VII:12)

This asymmetrical relationship, however, is not recognized in the monism of Kashmir Shaivism.

For Kashmir Shaivism, Lord Śiva is just as much the individual as the individual is Lord Śiva; everything is everything (*sarvaṁsarvātmakam*).

The Trika doctrine is the exposition of Lord Śiva's three-fold presence: transcendent (*Parā*/Śiva), universal (*patāparā*/Śakti) and individual (*aparā/nara*). Lord Śiva is both transcendent (*viśvottīrṇa*) and immanent (*viśvaya*), a condition proper to the term Absolute. Abhinavagupta praises Lord Śiva as the treasure of *prakāsa* and *vimarśa*, whose glory is the entire objective world. *Prakāsa* is the self-luminous nature of God consciousness and *vimarśa* (= *svātantrya śakti*, i.e., absolute freedom), His energy of self-awareness. Lord Śiva is the embodiment of consciousness (*caitanyam ātma*) and is simultaneously aware of His own nature. The universe is His body, His *śakti*, His energetic expression of Himself, in Himself, by Himself, to Himself. As such, the objective world is considered to be the glory of Lord Śiva. According to Kashmir Shaivism, the One is the Many, Lord Śiva is quite literally the individual.

Contrary to the proclamations of Advaita Vedānta, which consider the objective world to be altogether illusory (*māyā*), Swami Lakshmanjoo tells us:

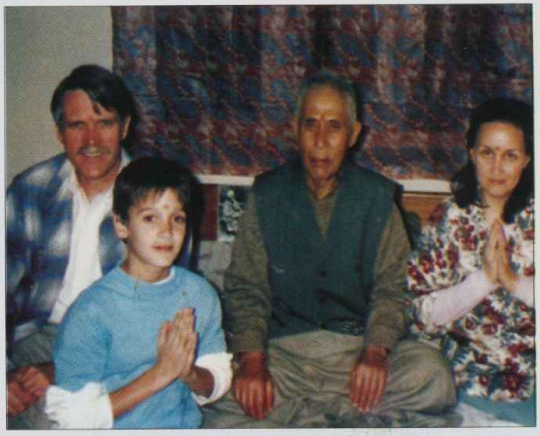
> Kashmir Shaivism argues that if Lord Śiva is real, then how could an unreal substance come out from something that is real? If Lord Śiva is real, then His creation is also real. Why should it be said that Lord Śiva is real and his creaton is an illusion (*māyā*)? Kashmir Shaivism explains that the existence of this universe is just as real as the existence of Lord Śiva. As such, it is true, real, pure, and solid. There is noting at all about it which is unreal.

In the first chapter of his *Tantrāloka*, Abhinavagupta exclaims:

> O objective world! You are so great. By force you enter in the hearts of philisophers and make them dance. Your true nature of objectivity you conceal and make them dance; you joyfully play with them. And those philosophers who perceive and take for granted that 'you O objective world are *jaḍa* (inert), that you are not caitanya, that you are not one with God consciousness,' [in actuality] they are *jaḍa* themselves .. .in fact they are [more] degraded than jaḍa.

Like Kashmir Shaivism, Sāṁkhya-Yoga and Jainism affirm the reality of *prakṛti* (material nature). They, however, hold that *puruṣa* and *prakṛiti* are completely autonomous entities. On the other hand, Kashmir Shaivism describes the relationship of spirit and matter in terms of *kartā* (doer) and *karma* (deed). Lord Śiva (i.e. God consciousness) is the conductor of all causes and effects that occur within creation because all corporeal things are by their very nature *asvātantra* (dependent) and therefore *jaḍa* (inert). Inertness and dependence are qualities of that which cannot prove its own existence without the support of consciousness. Every element from *śakti tattva* to *pṛithvi tattva* is dependent upon *Śiva tattva*, whose light of consciousness (*prakāśa*) is the necessary grounding of all existents and therefore constitutes the very fabric of their existence. As such, spirit and matter are one.

Swamiji tells us that *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* are, in fact, the limited reflections of Śiva and Śakti. As fire is inseparable from its heat, so too is God consciousness (Śiva) inseparable from His energy (*svātantrya śakti*). Likewise, *puruṣa* is forever embraced with *prakṛiti*. By extension, *puruṣa* is therefore considered to be an actor (*kartā*) rather than *prakṛiti* as Sāṁkhya-Yoga holds. If stricken of



Denise Hughes, John Hughes and young Viresh with Swami ji

consciousness, *prakṛti* is absolutely lifeless, Kashmir Shaivism admits that *puruṣa* is *paṅgu*. (without limbs), however, it is the light of consciousness (*prakāśa*) that illuminates what would otherwise be an utterly dark, unintelligible, and therefore nonexistent universe.

According to Sāṁkhya, the intellect (*buddhi*) comprehends the universe by simultaneously reflecting consciousness (*puruṣa*) and material nature (*prakṛti*). Notwithstanding *buddhi's* said function, Kashmir Shaivism observes that *buddhi*, being a product of *prakṛti*, is *jaḍa* (inert). Kashmir Shaivism continually stresses the fact that knowledge cannot be an attribute of that which is inherently unconscious. Swamiji tells us that *buddhi* does not possess the force to distinguish between *sukha* (pleasure), *duḥkha* (pain) and *moha* (illusion). Rather, the capacity to distinguish knowledge lies in the field of consciousness. Kashmir Shaivism argues that *buddhi* can only provide a mere reflection, as is the case with an ordinary mirror, and does not possess the capacity for cognizing the reflection. Our experience tells us that the objective world is much more than a mere intangible reflection and we must, therefore, discover why and how this is so. Swamiji says:

> Reflection in intellect is unreal, it is just like a reflection in the mirror. But reflection in God consciousness is real; we are all reflected in God consciousness, so we are real. When a thing is reflected in God consciousness, it is not reflected only in formation, it is reflected in *śabda, sparśa, rūpa, rasa* [and *gandha*] ... you can touch it, you can smell it. This is the difference between reflection in God consciousness and reflection in [an] ordinary mirror.

According to Kashmir Shaivism, the universe is not 'created' - it is a 'reflected'. If the universe were created it would necessarily exist apart from its creator. This being the case, we must then ask: if the universe is a reflection, would it not then be separate from the reflected? For this, Swamiji says:

> In consciousness, however, you see only the reflected thing and not anything that is reflection.' That which is reflected (bimha) is in fa ct *svātantrya*. This whole universe is the reflected in God consciousness of *svātantrya*. There is no additional class of similar objects existing outside of this would that he reflects in His nature. The outside element, that which is reflected, is only [His] *svātantrya*. The infinite variety which is created is only the expansion of [His] *svātantrya*.

As Lord Śiva and His energy, *svātantrya śakti*, are inseparable, we must conclude that nothing is actually reflected (bimha). There is only the reflection (*pratibimba*) of God consciousness upon the mirror of God consciousness *Svātantrya* is the mirror. Swamiji tells us:

> The creation of this universe is the outcome of this reflection... This reflection, however, is not like that reflection which take place in an ordinary mirror wherein the mirror is the reflector and that which is reflected in the mirror is external to the mirror. The reflection of the universe, which take place in Lord Śiva's own nature, is like the reflection, which takes place in a shaped mirror. Here Lord Śiva takes the formation of a cup [shaped mirror] and puts another cup [shaped mirror] in front of His nature. And in that second cup, which is insuperable from Him, the reflection of the universe takes place.

If there is only the reflection of God consciousness upon the mirror of God consciousness (i.e., *svātantrya śakti*), how then are we to make sense of the differentiated objective world and the experience of subjective limitation and individuality? If one were to perceive everything as a reflection in God consciousness, only God consciousness would be perceived. However, this is not the case. We perceive a differentiated universe teeming with countless unique beings and objects. The existence of the objective world can neither be attributed to the reflection of the intellect, as it can only provide an intangible reflection, nor is it simply the reflection of God consciousness, which would render an absolutely monistic perception.

Like Kashmir Shaivism, Advaita Vedānta has identified *māyā* as the cause of the differentiated universe. However, they have failed to grant her (*māyā*) a definitive ontological status and have consequently underestimated her activity and presence. The great Trika masters, on the other hand,

have discovered *māyā* to be an actual element (*tattva*) and have thusly been able to intricately describe *how* and *why* she operates. According to *Trika*, *māyā śakti* is the extroverted state of Lord Śiva's *svātantrya śakti*.

The *Mālinīvijayavārtiha* states: "When [Śiva's] power of action reaches its most intense extroversion it becomes *māyā*." (MVV 1.173c-174b) Lord Śiva, who is eternally embraced with His consort, *svātantrya śakti* (His own nature), is continually at the climax of bliss (*ānanda*); *māyā* represents the 'overflowing' of His bliss. According to Trika, *māyā* is therefore not separate from Śiva, for She is the very fabric and expression of Śiva, *Māyā* is no longer an entity outside Śiva and souls, but simply Śiva's miraculous power to project himself as subjects [and objects] at various levels of contraction. Swamiji tells us:

> ...*svātantrya śakti* is that state of energy which can produce the power of going down and coming up again, both at will, whereas *māyā* will only give you the strength of going down and not the ability of rising up again; *māyā śakti* is that universal energy which is owned by the individual being, the individual soul. And when that same universal energy is owned by the universal being, it is called *svātantrya śakti*:

In his *Tantrāloka*, Abhinavagupta describes three stages of *māyā's* flow: *māyā śakti*, *māyā granthi* and *māyā tattva*, each of which are accompanied by three impurities (*mala's*): *āṇavamala*, *māyīyamala* and *kārmamala* respectively. *Māyā śakti* produces the first and subtlest impurity, *āṇavamala*; the experience of which Swamiji explains:

> Energy of *māyā* is that illusive energy of Lord Śiva where you don't find any distinction between the illusive energy of Lord Śiva and *svātantrya śakti*; when you cannot differentiate God consciousness and individual consciousness (*bheda avabhāsa*); you feel that this whole universe is one with God consciousness, but you don't feel it exactly ... you are gone, you are away from God consciousness, and you feel that still you are in God consciousness, that is *māyā śakti*; you are in ignorance [but] you don't feel that you are ignorant; misunderstanding begins from *māyā śakti*.

There are two phases of *āṇavamala: lolikā* and *rāga*. *Lolikā āṇavamala* creates the feeling of a general (*sāmānya*), unspecific, and all-round deficiency in Lord Śiva's being as described above. *Rāga āṇavamala;* which begins to take precedence in the remaining phases of *māyā's* flow described below, creates the feeling of particular (*viśeṣa*) deficiencies and corresponding desires. Alongside *māyā granthi* (literally: 'illusive knot') arises the second impurity, *māyīyamala*, which produces the tendency for possessing differentiated attributions and conceptions in relation to one's self (e.g., 'this is mine', 'that is not mine,' etc.). At this stage, Lord Śiva begins to actually feel ignorant of His own nature. *Māyā tattva* produces *kārmamala*, the third impurity, producing the tendency for and appropriation of differentiated activity (e.g., 'I do this,' 'I don't do that,' etc.) Swamiji tells us: "*Māyā tattva* is the cause of the universe, i.e. the cause of creating this differentiated universe." At this stage, Lord Śiva is engrossed by all three *mala's* and is *asvātantra*, without the power of absolute freedom, completely unconscious, and rendered utterly incomplete (*apūrṇatā*). The *Spanda Kārikā* states:

> When, by your own freedom, your own free will, you become worthless, powerless, incapable of anything, then desire rises in you for doing this and doing that, (*Spanda Kārikā* 1.9)

From *māyā tattva* emerge the five kañcukas (coverings), which serve to pacify Lord Śiva with encumbered varsion of His universal attributes. The first covering is *kalā tattva*, the limited power of creativity, which awakens Lord Śiva with limited consciousness. Swamiji tell us that *kalā tattva* is the creator and baste of the differentiated universe, out of which every element from *vidyā tattva* to *pṛithvī tattva* issue forth in a simultaneous-successive manner. According to Abhinavagupta, if it was not for the simultaneous-successive infusion of limitation, *māyā śakti* would instantaneously revert back to *svātantrya śakti* and God consciousness would again prevail.

The mirror of God consciousness (*svātantrya śakti*)] which would otherwise provide a purely

monistic reflection, is veiled by *māyā*, the *malas*, the *kañcukas*, and the remainder of the elementary world, through which Lord Śiva's *māyā śakti* issues forth reflections of countless unique souls (puruṣa's) ipu possessed of particular natures (*prakṛiti's*). Constitutive of *prakṛti* are the gurus's, of which Swamiji says:

> [*Prakṛti*] is the field where the three tendencies arise and flow forth. These three tendencies are known as the three *guṇas*, the three qualities. They are, respectively *sattva, rajas,* and *tamas*. *Prakṛti* is the combination of these three *guṇas* but without any distinction."

To clarify the nature of the *guṇa's*, the *Īśvarapratyabnhijñā* tells us:

> What are spoken of as knowledge (*jñāna*) and action (*krīya*) of the Lord in relation to the objects, which are identical with Him; the same, together with the third, *māyā*, are the three gunas of the limited subject, namely *sattva, rajas*, and *tamas*.

Abhinavagupta further clarifies in his commentary (*vimarsinī*) of the same:

> Consciousness (prakāśa) and freedom (*vimarśa=svātantrya śakti*) are (Lord Śiva's) powers of knowledge and action respectively. *Māyā* is the Lord's power, which is responsible for the consciousness "I this" (aham idam)... these three powers are recognized to be natural, i.e., not-created, in the Lord. But when there is the ignorance of the essential nature of the self and cognition and action refer to objects, which are (recognized to be) separate (from the self)... then arise *sattva, rajas* and *tamas*, which are characterized by pleasure, pain and absence of both (*moha*).

Puruṣa, equipped with the tendencies and limited capacities conferred by *māyā*, the *malas*, and the *kañcukas*, agitates *prakṛtis* latent *guṇas*. Thus, *sattva* (purity or lucidity), *rajas* (passion) and *tamas* (dullness) arise and fluctuate within *puruṣa's* nature (*prakṛti*), through which the *antaḥkaraṇas* (internal organs) arise : *buddhi* (intellect), *manas* (mind), and *ahaṁkāra* (ego). The *antaḥkraṇas* are the platform upon which the fluctuating *guṇas* are cognized by way of the *jñānendriyas* (five organs of cognition) and subsequently acted upon through the *karmendriyas* (five organs of action), thus conferring uniquely differentiated cognitive and objective experiences to each individual *puruṣa*. The three *antaḥkaraṇas* together with the five *tanmātras* (the 'abodes' of the five senses) comprise the *puryaṣṭaka*, which is the vehicle that carries *puruṣa's* impressions (*saṁskāras*) of differentiated cognitive and objective experiences from birth to bith. As it is said in the *Spanda Kārikās*:

> Besieged by *puryaṣṭaka*, which rises from the *tanmātras* and exists in mind, ego, and intellect, he (the bound soul) becomes subservient and undergoes the experiences that arise from it in the form of ideas about certain objects and the pleasure or pain that accrues from them. Owing to the continuance of the *puryaṣṭaka*, he (the bound soul) leads transmigratory existence. (*Spanda Kārikās* 3:1: 17-18)

Every tradition considers ignorance (*ajñāna*) to be the cause of *puruṣa's* bondage, by which the soul is entangled in the wheel of repeated births and deaths (*saṁsāra*). However, the cause of *puruṣa's* ignorance is at variance within every tradition. According to Sāṁkhya-Yoga and Advaita Vedānta, *puruṣa's* bondage results from its mistaken identification with *prakṛrti / māyā*. Jainism proclaims that *prakṛti* (specifically *karmic* matter or *'karmas'*) physically obscures the knowledge of the soul, obscures the perception element of the soul, defiles the bliss element of the soul, and obstructs the energy element of the soul. Consequently, these traditions prescribe the complete separation form matter (*prakṛti*), be it cognitively (Sāṁkhya-Yoga, Advaita Vedānta) or physically (Jainism).

Kashmir Shaivism denouncess these positions, arguing that *māyā*, and therefore *prakṛti*, is the very expression and representation of God's nature and therefore must not be ignored or omitted, for to do so would be to minimize the infinite scope of the Absolute (*anuttara*). Swamiji says:

> Bondage is not separate from being, it is combined with being. It is not possible that bondage comes from another source. Bondage is a result of your own freedom, your own free will with which you have bound yourself.

According to Advaita Vedānta, Sānkhya-Yoga, and Jainism, *puruṣa's* continued involvement with *prakṛti / māyā* is fashioned and sustained by *karma*. Firstly, Kashmir Shaivism argues that māyā's existence precedes corporeality and is in fact the material cause of puruṣa's limited nature (prakṛiti) and its persistence, therefore, remains beyond the scope of karmic influence. Secondly, although one must initially achieve the state of guṇatita (i.e., cofnitively transcend the fluctuations of *prakṛiti's guṇas*), Kashmir Shaivism recognizes the *mala's*, i.e., the tendencies of differentiated perception (*āṇavamala, māyīyamala*) and differentiated action (*kārmamala*), whose affections persist well beyond the achievement of *guṇātīta*, to be the actual cause of *saṁsāra*. As it is said in the *Sarvavāra Tantra* :

Because of this ignorance, you are filled with differentiated, not undifferentiated, knowledge and you become bound in the wheel of repeated births and deaths. This happens in innumerable ways:

The *Svacchanda Tantra* explains:

Because of the impurity *āṇavamala*, which is attached with *kalā* (limited action) and *vidyā* (limited knowledge), *caitanya* (independent universal consciousness) is lost. It is absorbed in *rāga* (attachment) and limited by *kāla* (time). It is confined in the bondage of *niyati* (attachment to a particular object). This limitation is strengthened by the limitation of the ego. It is absorbed in the body of *prakṛti* and ever united with three *guṇas, sattva, rajas* and *tamas*. It is establish in the reality of *buddhi* (intellect). The universal I is limited in individual. It is limited by the mind, by the organs of knowledge, by the organs of action, by the five *tanmātrās* and finally by the five gross elements."

Although it is admitted that *svātantrya sakti* and *māyā śakti* are one, the *mala's* (impurities), which are the productions of *māyā*, do not reside in *svātantrya śakti*. Why? Swamiji says:

What if, for the time being, we were to say that the veil of ignorance exists before you are realized, and that afterwards, when you are realized, it does not exist? Then, if ignorance does not exist after realization, it is the truth that it did not exist at all, Why? Because at the time of realization, the aspirant realizes and knows that ignorance does not exist at all. So that ignorance never exists. Whatever he called ignorance existed, but it was not actually ignorance; it was really non-fullness of knowledge.

According to Kashmir Shaivism, self-realization brings about the understanding that there never was a moment that Lord Śiva (i.e., the Self) did not exist in His fullness; never a moment that Lord Śiva was actually ignorant of His own nature. Swamiji says:

The evidence that, while being in the state of ignorance, Śiva was already filled with knowledge is found in the fact that, at the moment Ho realizes His own nature and is filled with knowledge, He has the experience that the state of knowledge was already there. So there was never really any separation. Separation only seemed to exist.

In his *Gītārtha Saṁgraha*, Abhinavagupta says: "That which is no–existent will never exist; that which exists will never not exist." If the *malas* were truly substantial, they would always remain so and consequently, they could never be overcome, However, as it is the case that the *malas* no longer 'exist' at the time of realization, they are deemed unsubstantial and therefore unreal. They simply cause misunderstanding such as the fear caused by mistakenly perceiving a rope to be a snake. John Hughes says:

The trick lies in the fact that by Śiva's play he causes the limited individual to experience this world of diversity as the only reality. Real knowledge exists when the aspirant becomes one with God consciousness, which is the same as attaining perfect Self-knowledge. In possessing real knowledge he knows that the world of differentiation is not actually different from Śiva, the supreme reality.

Swamiji continues:

In the path of Shaivism, there is nothing that exists or that does not exist that is separated from *citprakāsa*, the conscious self. So how can impurity (*mala*) come between you and the conscious self,

creating obstacles and bondage? It cannot. Then what is impurity (*mala*)? Impurity is not dirt, impurity is ignorance.

Swamiji says, "The self is only a vacuum full of consciousness (*ākāśakalpi*). And within that vacuum, that contraction or limitation, are found the states from *Anāśrita Śiva* to limited *jīva* (*sakala*)," Kashmir Shaivism delineates seven classes of *pramatṛ's* (perceivers). Listed in ascending order, they are: *sakala, pralayākala, vijñānākala, mantra* (*śuddhavidyā*), *mantreśvara* (*īśvara*), *mantra maheśvara* (*sadāśiva*), and. Śiva / śakti. The limited individual is *sakala*, who is concerned only with objectivity (*prakṛti* to *pṛithivī tattva*) and is therefore an object itself. Here, *puruṣa* is spell bound by all three impurities (*mala's*).

Abhinavagupta distinguishes, two states of *pralayākala: apavedya* and *savedya pralayākala*. Swamiji explains:

> [*Apavedya*] *pralayākala* is when all senses stop to function [and] mind stops to function... nothing is functioning and there is no awareness at the same time. *Savedya pralayākala* is the same state, but you are aware that everything is finished.

Whereas some traditions such as Sāṁkhya-Yoga and Buddhism understand *pralayākala* to be the experience of final liberation, Kashmir-Shaivism does not. Although *kārmamala* has ceased to function and the fluctuations of *prakṛti's guṇas* have been transcended, *māyīyamala* and *āṇavamala* are still engaged at this stage. Nevertheless, Swamiji says:

> At first, this is the way; *pralayākala* is the way. From *sakala* you have to pass *pralayākala*, and then in *vijñānākala*, then *śuddhavidyā*, then *īśvara* and then *sadāśiva* and finally in Śiva.

Vijñānākalā, which is subtly distinct from *savedya pralayākala*, is the first stage in which pure consciousness and pure *svātantrya* are experienced, albeit in a flickering and unstable manner; sometimes he experiences absolute consciousness without absolute freedom, sometimes he experiences absolute freedom without consciousness. This condition is caused by *āṇavamala*, which, although tending towards its dissolution (*didhvaṁsiṣuḥ*), continues to persist at this stage. This state of *vijñānākala*, Swamiji tells us, is understood by Advaita Vedānta to be final liberation, or *āṇanda rūpata*.

At this stage, the aspirant has exerted as much effort as he / she is capable; there is nothing more to be done as far as practice is concerned. The remaining portion of one's ascent into the higher states of awareness (*śuddhavidyā, īśvara, sadāśiva*, and *Śiva/Śakti*), each of which represent the experience of absolute consciousness and absolute freedom in ascending degrees of coalescence, is effortless, affected solely by the direct grace (*śaktipāta*) of Lord Śiva.

Actually, the entire process is handled by Lord Śiva's grace. As Swamiji says, there are three kinds of grace:

> One grace is *prakṛti – puruṣa viveka*, the second grace takes place through *māyā puruṣa viveka*, and the third grace takes place from *mala* and *puruṣa viveka; viveka* means discriminating perception. When you discriminate yourself from that (i.e., *prakṛti, māyā*, and the *malas* respectively), you get away from that.

Lord Śiva governs the universe by two handles; *tirodhāna śakti* (concealing energy) and *anugraha śakti* (revealing energy). The former disables Lord Śiva from recognizing His true nature, while the latter enables Lord Śiva to recognize His nature. Both operate through Lord Śiva's body, the objective world, which we have come to understand is the very expression of His *svātantrya śakti / māyā śakti*. As the individual is one with Lord Siva, it is actually we who conceal and reveal our own nature from and to ourselves, and our commitment to practice and the force of awareness we maintain therein is concurrent with and indicative of the degree of *śaktipata / anugraha* with which we grace ourselves.

As the objective world is what Swamiji aptly calls the 'commentary' of Lord Śiva, the Trika Shaiva is thus instructed to view the entire spectrum of cognitive and organic phenomena as opportunities for realizing God consciousness. Contrary to the proclamations of Sāṁkhya-Yoga, Jainism, and Advaita Vedānta, Swamiji says:

The freedom from all our miseries can neither be

obtained through the renunciation of the world, nor be hatred towards this world, but by feeling the presence of God everywhere, Who is the inmost centre of each and every object.

Thus, the *Svacchanda Tantra* prescribes the following:

Supreme God consciousness should be sought with great effort in whatever is seen by the eyes, whatever is felt by speech, whatever is though by the mind, whatever is perceived by the intellect, whatever is owned by limited ego, whatever is existing in the objective world, and whatever is not existing in the objective world. (*Svacchanda Tantra* 12.163-64)

Three means (*upāyas*) are prescribed in Kashmir Shaivism, which utilize the entire gamut of subjective, cognitive, and objective experiences as tools for realizing God consciousness. Listed in descending order with respect to one's capacity and force of awareness, they are: *śambhavopāya, śaktopāya*, and *āṇavopāya. Bhairava* (Lord Śiva) reveals one hundred and twelve practical applications of these *upāyas* to His consort *Bhairavī* (*Pārvatī*) in the sacred text, the *Vijñāna Bhairava*.

Yoga literally means 'union' or 'yoke.' Whereas Sāṁkhya-Yoga, Jainism, and Advaita Vedānta prescribe the disunion (*ayoga*) of spirit (*puruṣa*) from matter (*prakṛti / māyā*), Kashmir Shaivism calls for the realization of the actual and fundamental unity of matter and spirit, in Jungian terms, psychic wholeness achieved through the 'royal marriage' of the unconscious and the conscious. In Kashmir Shaivism, this 'marriage' is called *pramiti bhāva*, which is achieved through *bhakti* (devotion) for Lord Śiva, who is observed and adored through His glory, the objective world. The path of renunciation (*sanmgaśa*) cannot lead to this state. Swamiji tells us:

Actually, renunciation does not direct you towards God consciousness; attachment diverts you towards God consciousness. When there is love, attachment [for God], it will carry you there. What can you renounce? You cannot renounce your body, you cannot renounce your hunger, you cannot renounce your thirst; you are still eating, you are still drinking. Actual renunciation is when you renounce your body consciousness and get mixed in God consciousness and that comes through attachment towards God - there must be love towards God consciousness.

Real devotion (*bhakti*), Swamiji tells us, occurs when one perceives each and every object to be the glamour of one's own consciousness. *Pramiti* is that state where objectivity and cognitivity are absorbed within subjectivity, where all differentiated knowledge exists undifferentiatedly (*nirvikalpa*). The pure elements, or *śuddha tattvas* (*śuddhavidyā, īśvara, sadāśiva, Śiva / Śakti*), represent the ascending stages of absorption. Lord Śiva is He who recognizes and accepts (*abhyupagama*) the entire universe as His own nature.

As this discussion has been a strictly intellectual analysis, we must understand the role of intellectual knowledge (*bauddha jñāna*) in relation to practice and actual experience (*pauruṣa jñāna*). Intellectual knowledge enables one to know a) where one is situated and b) where one is headed (*anusaṁdhāna*). This knowledge directs the aspirant to strive for the highest level of experience and subsequently enables her / him to recognize and accept the subtle experiences as they arise, be they through practice or grace. With the support of intellectual knowledge acquired through scripture (*śāstra*) and / or a spiritual preceptor (*guru*), together with an unfaltering faith (*śraddhā*) in their proclamations, the aspirant comes to be free from doubt[58] (*śaṅkā*) and is able to avoid being misled or hesitant while traversing upon the 'razors edge' that is the spiritual path.

It is my hope that this analysis has shown that there is much more to be recognized upon the path of liberation than Advaita Vedānta, Sāṁkhya-Yoga and Jainism hold to be true; that the obstacles to be overcome are not simply objective in nature, but subjective too. Although the achievement of transcendence is an initial requirement and a significant achievement on one's spiritual journey, the real freedom, the real liberation, according to Kashmir Shaivism, is the re-cognition and acceptance of one's immanence.

Let us begin to watch and listen intently to Swamiji as he describes this reality from the point of view of *Parabhairava* Himself.

Jai Guru Dev !

(Courtesy: Universal Shaiva Fellowship)

Lakshman Joo - A Yogi of Kashmir

– Jaidev Singh –

The late Thakur Jaidev Singh (1893-1986) was a renowned scholar who studied some of the important texts of Kashmir Shaivism under the guidance of Swami Lakshmanjoo at his Ashram in Ishber, Srinagar for several years. He published fully annotated translations of these texts in the light of the insights provided by Swamiji. This article, published in the January 1970 issue of the spiritual magazine, "The Mountain Path," was written by him to pay homage to Swami ji and introduce him to the readers of the magazine. We are reproducing the article here for its historical importance.

I had a great desire to study the Shaiva philosophy of Kashmir. I struggled with some texts, but found that I could not understand them without the help of a teacher who was brought up in the tradition of the school. All the great savants of the Shaiva philosophy are dead and gone. The sole surviving exponent of this system is Shri Lakshman Joo, also known as Swami Ishvara Swarup ji. He was kind enough to accept me as his pupil and I learned much from him. As I came in contact with him, I found that he was not only a great scholar of Shaiva philosophy and could give a lucid exposition of the texts, but was also a great Yogi.

A brief sketch of his life may be of interest to the readers of 'The Mountain Path.'

He was born in 1907 A.D. in Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir. His father's name was Shri Narain Dass Raina and mother's Shrimati Arnyamali. His father was the first man to introduce 'houseboats' in Kashmir. His family guru was Shri Rama. Shri Rama was the greatest exponent of Shaivagama, but more than that he was the greatest Yogi that Kashmir had known. In Srinagar, many stories are current about his *siddhis*. He had only to look at or touch a person, and he was bound to be a changed man. Such was the wonderful '*shaktipata*' that he wielded. Narain Dass had built a separate house for him where he could carry out his *sadhana* and teach the agama texts to his pupils. This is now known as Rama Trika Shaiva Ashram (located at Fatehkadal in Srinagar).

Narain Dass approached Swami Ram to give a name to his newly born child. Swami ji said, "I am called Rama; let this child be called Lakshmana". Lakshmana's leanings towards the higher life were marked even in early childhood. When he was three years old, his play consisted in making of a *Shivalinga* out of clay and worshiping it. At the age of five, he would sit down for meditation and while in this condition would now and then show signs of sudden surprise. His parents were puzzled by the abnormal condition of the child and took him to Swami Ram. He said, "This boy was a great Yogi in the last life. His Yoga would be consummated in this life."

His *yajnopavita samskara* (sacred thread

ceremony) was performed when he was a child of nine. Swami Ram taught him the *japa* of *Gayatri mantra* with *pranapana*, and also certain yoga practices according to the Shaiva discipline.

He was now sent to school. There he used to go into *samadhi* now and then. He was considered to be an abnormal boy by his teachers. One of his inquisitive teachers put him this question, "What do you notice in your state of absorption?" The boy replied in the Kashmiri language that he experienced '*Badi bod*' i.e. the Supreme.

One day his teacher asked him to do physical exercises. Instead of doing so, he formed a group of few students and started *bhajan* (devotional song). The teacher was furious and inflicted on him twenty five strokes with a cane. The boy went back home, crying. Next day the teacher fell ill and had fever exactly for twenty-five days.

When he was thirteen years of age, his parents thought of arranging his matrimony. He came to know of it and said to his parents politely but firmly, "Kindly don't arrange my marriage. I have decided to remain a celibate all my life." His parents proposed his marriage a number of times, but knowing his firm resolve gave up for good the idea of getting him married.

His father fell badly ill and so asked his son to look after his business. He was in the pre-matric class, but had to give up his studies and look after his father's business.

As he was now free from the routine work of the school, he decided to study the *Shaiva Shastra*. Swami Ram, the greatest savant of *Shaiva Shastra* had attained *mahasamadhi* by now, but he had taught the *Shastra* to his devoted pupil Mahtab Kak, who was also assigned the task of guiding the young Lakshman into spirituality. So he started studying the *Shastra* under the guidance of Mahtab Kak.

But is was not only the theoretical side of the Shaiva system that he wanted to learn, he gave even much greater time to the practice of Yoga. He used to get up at 2 a.m. and practise Yoga till dawn. When he was fifteen years old, he had the experience of self realization for the first time. After this he used to go into *samadhi* even while he was in his workshop. He now lost all interest in the workshop and neglected his business. His father reprimanded him many a time for this.

This put him in a quandary. He began to cogitate within himself, "On the one hand, there is the duty of carrying out the desire of my father, on the other there is the call of the Spirit. What am I to do? "The call of the Spirit proved to be irresistible. He bowed to the inner monitor. In 1926, he took a lion's skin for his seat and left home without taking anything else with him. Finding him absent, his father started a search for him. A number of people were sent to different quarters in the city to find him, but without success. His brothers began to rummage among his books and papers, and found on a piece of paper the following note left behind by the boy:

"My dear brothers, I am leaving in search of the Supreme. Kindly take care of my parents."

The parents were in great mental anguish at the sudden departure of the son from home, and sent frantic telegrams and telephonic messages to friends and relatives. A formal request was also made to the Police to find out the whereabouts of the boy.

Next day his father received the following message from a relative in Sopore: "This morning I saw Lakshman going on foot to Sadhuganga Ashrama."

On receipt of this news, the parents went out posthaste to Sadhuganga via Sopore, and after a few hours found the body seated on the lion's skin in deep meditation near a spring in a jungle. They sat there with heaving heart without disturbing the boy. When he returned to normal consciousness, he found his parents seated before him. They requested him to go back home. He said in grave and determined voice, "Now I cannot live in the home." His father promised to build for him an Ashrama in an unfrequented place in Srinagar itself. His father went back to Srinagar, and started building an Ashrama for him (in Namchibal).

Lakshmanjoo meanwhile came and began to live in a village, named Danyahama, in Harwan, near Srinagar. After four months, his Ashrama was completed, and he moved into it. Now he started learning Sanskrit grammar and Shaiva scriptures from the reputed scholar, Shri Maheshwar Razdan. He studied Shaiva scriptures under his guidance for seven years, and became thoroughly proficient in these.

In 1934, Lakshman Joo built an Ashram for

himself on a site between Nishat and Shalimar. It was named Ishvara Ashrama.

Now Lakshman Joo's father retired from business, divided his property equally among his sons, and came to live with him along with his wife.

In 1946, his mother fell seriously ill. He nursed her assiduously for two years. She passed away in 1948. Six months later his father also passed away. Lakshman Joo has always been devoted to his parents, and performs their *shraddha* every year with great earnestness.

He has ungrudgingly taught the scriptures to many seekers after Truth. He taught *Brahamsutras* to Shri Nilakanthananda Sarasvati in 1954.The present writer had also the benefit of learning Shaiva Shastra at his feet. He has taught Shaiva philosophy to Miss L. Silburn of Paris for a number of years. She has translated into French many books on Shaiva philosophy. The translation of *Parmarthasara* and *Vijnanabhairava* have already been published. The present writer has translated Shiva-Stotravali of Utpaladeva and *Sambapanchasika* into Hindi, and has edited Abhinavagupta's commentary on the *Bhagavad-gita*.

In 1959, Shri Lakshman Joo disposed of his old Ashrama at Ishwar Ashrama, (Ishbar) and built a new smaller Ashrama near Nishat gardens, and now resides there.

Maharaja Karan Singh of Kashmir had no male issue. His mother expressed a keen desire to Shri Lakshman Joo that she should be blessed with a grandson. She had the blessing of the *Yogiraja*, and the Maharaja is now a proud father. The Maharaja in gratefulness has promised to open a *Shaivashrama* in the Gupt Ganga temple. (Maharaj Karan Singh ji has since constructed a Mathika in Gupta Ganga where Swami ji used to give lectures on Kashmir Shaivism on every Sunday).

Shri Lakshman Joo is a great scholar, a great man and a great yogi. As a man he is upright, humble and extremely generous and kind. Hundreds flock to him with their tales of the woe every Sunday, and he tries to help everybody.

As a yogi, he is greatly advanced. He lives mostly in *pramatri bhava* (in the full state of a knower). He is a great admirer of Ramana Maharishi and says he visited the Ashrama of the Maharishi once when he was alive. His exposition of the Shaiva texts is backed by his personal experience and therefore comes home to the students as a living, vibrating truth. We are really fortunate that there are yogis like him still alive in our land.

His teachings may be summarized thus:

Parama Shiva or Supreme Reality is both static and dynamic. The dynamic aspect of Parama Shiva is known as Shakti. The entire manifestation is a play of his Shakti. The world is not an illusion but an epiphany, an expression of Shakti. The manifestation of Shakti is in subtle and gross forms. *Puryashtaka* i.e. the subtle body consisting of 5 *tanmatras*, *manas*, *buddhi* and *ahankara*.?

There are two areas of manifestation-the downward area and the upward area. In the downward area, Shakti plunges into the grossest form. In the upward area, Shakti rises towards self realization, towards the Supreme. The downward area is the *vilaya* or the veiling of the divine. The upward area is the *anugraha* or grace of the divine. In the upward area divinity is slowly but surely unfolded. In this upward area one should do his level best to realize the divinity within him.

For the average man, the best means for ascending on the spiritual path is to find out a competent guru or spiritual guide and take initiation from him.

Japa, constant awareness and *dhyana* or meditation are the best means for self-realization.

One should learn *manasa* (mental) *japa* of a mantra from a guru and practise it assiduously. This mantra will open the door to Parama Shiva. The mantra has, however, to be given by one who can transfer spiritual power, known as '*Shaktipata*'.

Constant awareness is the best means to the unfoldment of the spiritual consciousness, known as '*unmesha*' or divine-consciousness.

So far as *dhyana* or meditation is concerned, the best is the meditation on '*Shivo'ham*' or 'I am Shiva'. I am not the body or the emotions or the thought but I am Shiva Himself. One should concentrate on this thought in *hridaya* or the spiritual center. This is a mental concept no doubt, but this will dissolve all other *vikalpas* or mental concepts, and finally disappear itself. The aspirant will then have realization of the true Self within him.

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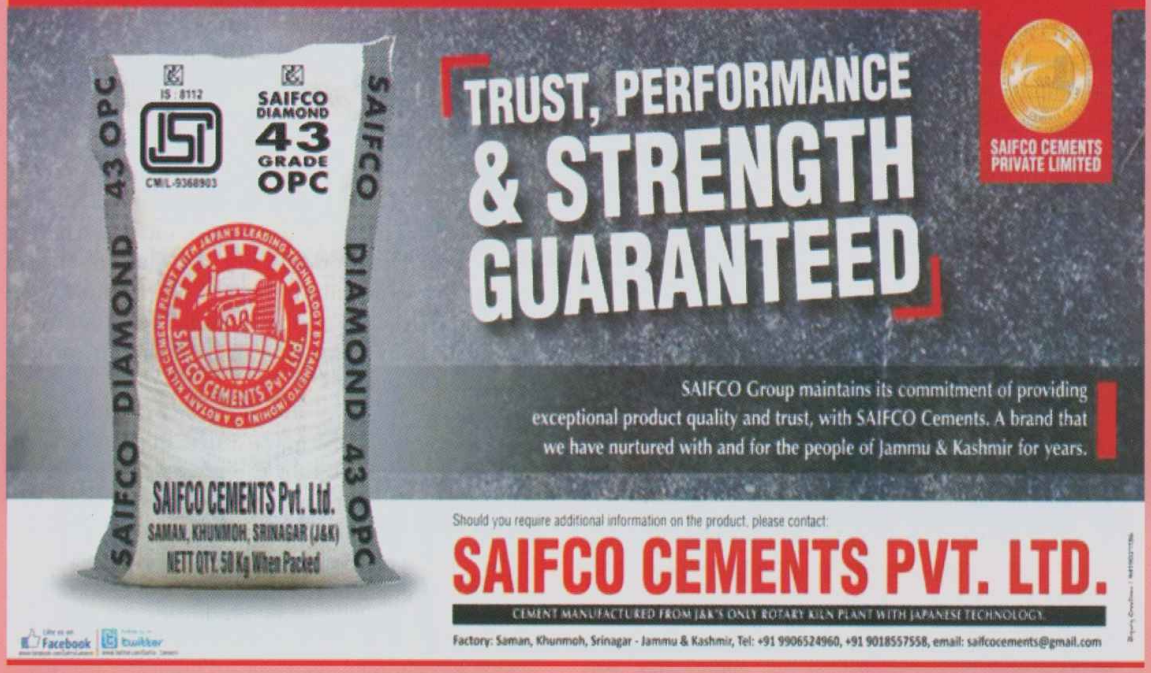

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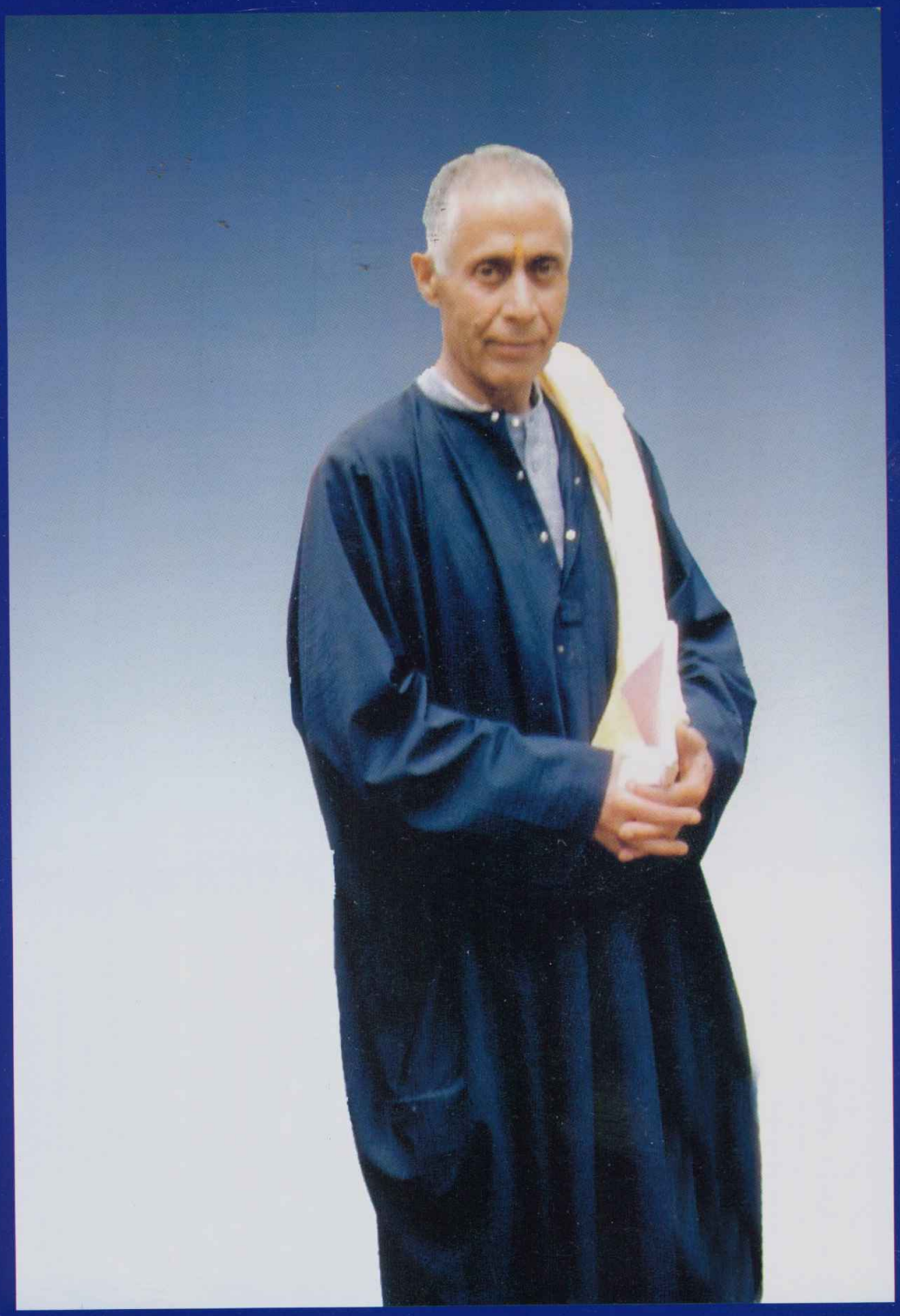

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